gressman representing another relocation site, the San Diego County Marine base, Camp Pendleton, of the phone calls he was getting. "They think of the Vietnamese as nothing but diseased job seekers." In Arkansas, at Fort Chaffee, which admitted twenty-five thousand refugees, the compound was so well guarded that a radical journalist compared it to the "strategic hamlets" the U.S. military used to build in South Vietnam. A recently returned veteran told him, "I don't like the people personally. I didn't see anything worth saving and I don't now." The protest placards read "GOOKS GO HOME."

In Detroit, a black autoworker told the *New York Times*, "People are losing their cars, houses, jobs. Let them stay there until we do something for people here." In Valparaiso, Indiana, a salesman asked, "How do you know we're not getting the bad guys? You can't say for sure. Nobody can, and Lord knows we've got enough Communist infiltration now." President Ford implored, "We can afford to be generous to refugees" as "a matter of principle." Mayor Daley of Chicago responded, "Charity begins at home." The Seattle City Council voted seven to one against a pro-settlement resolution. California governor Jerry Brown said Congress's refugee bill should be amended with a "jobs for Americans first" pledge. Explained Harvard sociologist David Riesman, "The national mood is poisonous and dangerous and this is one symptom—striking out at helpless refugees whose number is infinitesimal." Though one observer simply didn't see the cruelty of his countrymen before his eyes.

RONALD REAGAN HAD BEEN OBSESSED WITH THE DEBATE OVER AID TO South Vietnam. He heard in it, he said on the radio, "an echo of the hollow tapping of Neville Chamberlain's umbrella on the cobblestones of Munich." He counted dominoes falling: "Japan, the great industrial power capable of modernizing and arming a Communist Asia, has just opened discussions with Hanoi"; "Henry Kissinger returns empty-handed from the Middle East"; "The Sixth fleet may soon find it must withdraw or become a model ship in a bottle." He predicted that a lack of American will to save South Vietnam would "tempt the Soviet Union as it once tempted Hitler and the military rulers of Japan"—ushering in an imminent Communist massacre of innocents (he cited reports of Vietcong soldiers driving over crowds of refugees) behind a liberal "curtain of silence." He predicted purgatory for the "1,300 men still listed as missing in action over there." And, in an interview with the libertarian magazine *Reason*, he repeated his favorite old John Birch Society canard: "You know, Lenin said the Communists will take Eastern Europe, they will organize the hordes of Asia, he said they will then move into Latin America, and he said the United States, the last bastion of capitalism, will fall into their outstretched hands like overripe fruit. . . . [O]ne of these days, under the present policies of the Congress, the United States will stand alone as Lenin envisioned it and face the ultimate from the enemy."

He asked on the radio, of the imminent coming of those Asian hordes: "Will it be said of today's world leaders as it was of the pre–World War II leaders, 'They were better at surviving the catastrophe than they were at preventing it'?"

Then what he feared most came to pass: America denied South Vietnam military aid. America let South Vietnam fall. America cut and ran. It must be a pretty wicked nation, you might think he would have reflected, to countenance an evil like that.

Not at all, Reagan insisted, once it was over. Instead he found a way to see nobility, God's chosen nation doing naught but Christian duty.

He began a broadcast titled "Letters to the Editor": "In these times when so many of us have a tendency to lose faith in ourselves it's good now and then to be reminded of the good-natured, generous spirit that has been an American characteristic as long as there has been an America."

He then recounted a letter he claimed to have seen from an unnamed American missionary in Vietnam to an unidentified publication.

"The reverend described a 20-foot craft adrift in the Gulf of Thailand with no fuel, no food, no water, barely afloat and sinking with its cargo of 82 refugees.

"Towering over it was the aircraft carrier the USS *Midway*. The reference described the *Midway* as tired. It had already deposited some 2,000 refugees on other ships, refugees who had arrived in more than 500 flights. One flight was a light observation plane not designed for carrier landings. The *Midway* had moved up to top speed to enable the pilot to land with an entire family jammed inside the tiny fuselage. There were forty coppers on the deck, brand-new F5E fighters and A37s that had carried people who preferred not to be 'liberated' by the Communists. . . .

"Once onboard they had one question: would they be handed over to an unfriendly government, perhaps to be eventually murdered? The executive officer of the ship told him this would not happen. He said, 'Our job is to keep you as comfortable as possible, heal the sick, and feed you to your hearts' content.' That was the official policy of our nation and therefore of the *Midway*."

He then described a miracle of the loaves and fishes, straight out of the Gospel According to *Reader's Digest*:

“A tiny baby with double pneumonia was cured. People without clothes were given American clothing. Sailors took the old clothing and washed them for their guests. Pretty soon homeless children were being given piggyback rides on the shoulders of American seamen, and Navy T-shirts bearing the *Midway* decal began appearing on the little ones. . . .

“Ads went into the ship's paper asking for toys. Charity begat more charity.”

Reagan concluded: “In the dark days right after World War II, when our industrial power and military power were all that stood between a war-ravaged world and a return to the dark ages, Pope Pius XII said, ‘America has a genius for great and unselfish deeds. Into the hands of America God has placed the destiny of an afflicted mankind.’

“I think those young men on the *Midway* have reassured God that He hasn't given us more of an assignment than we can handle.”

In its years in Southeast Asia, the USS *Midway* had served as a death-dealing juggernaut—a launching pad for air strikes responsible for killing thousands, perhaps millions, of civilians. Listening to Ronald Reagan, you could imagine that its only role had been rescuing widows and orphans. That the *entire war* had been about rescuing widows and orphans. Others told you Vietnam was a crime, a waste—or, at best, something very, very complex. It took Ronald Reagan to explain how simple the whole thing was. Charity begetting more charity: how could it have happened any other way?

HIS COLUMN NOW RAN IN 226 NEWSPAPERS. HE TURNED DOWN DOZENS of speech invitations for every one he accepted. He was now broadcast on 286 stations—laboring mightily to turn his listeners into a dedicated conservative activist army. *“It's time to write your congressman again.”* *“Will Congress do anything about this mess? Well, maybe that's up to you.”* *“You and I should lobby for it. We should demand not only its passage but that the commission be manned by men and women who will determine whether the laws of the marketplace can replace the useless regulations and create real savings for the consumers. Only our indignation voiced out loud will bring this about. . . .”*

He railed against the government bureaucrats who “really rule America,” who were “not basically creative,” were “low risk takers” and “growing like Topsy”—but so much more dangerous than mere legislators because they made up rules behind closed doors, and “if you break one of those bureaucrat-designed regulations, you're guilty as charged unless you can prove you're innocent.” He railed against English teachers replacing grammar drills with “electives like creative writing, filmmaking, mythology, and detective story writing.” And the “Alice in Wonderland” world of bureaucracy: “To err is human,” he would quip. “It takes a government computer to really louse things up.” He told the story of a wife who got a letter informing her that her dead husband could no longer receive Social Security benefits: “Don't tell my husband,” she replied. “He'll die of a heart attack.” Such tales were good for comic relief. Except when they weren't funny at all. For instance, the “no fewer than five government agencies . . . studying the effects of leaded gasoline” who came up with “no data to verify harm from it,” which hadn't kept the EPA from spending $100 million mandating catalytic converters to attenuate the hazardous emissions. But the converters, he said, produced “a substance more harmful to you and me than those emissions they're controlling.”

Maybe the stories were true. Maybe they weren't. He had a way of telling a story that made it uncheckable: “An item recently appeared in a national magazine” (which magazine?). “Some years ago a poll was taken” (whose poll?). And the facts went by too fast for innocent radio listeners to check in any event. One time, he sternly lectured against Ahab-like maritime bureaucrats demanding that a tourist paddle wheeler, the *Delta Queen*, be fireproofed according to the law for modern ships. Even though she “has never had a fire.” Her owners said that would put them out of business. “No matter, said the bureaucrats in Washington. The *Delta Queen* could not be made an exception.” It had had a fire only two and a half years earlier.

But it all sure sounded convincing coming from Reagan. As did his plea that the delivery of first-class mail should be turned over to private companies. And that the government should stop suing the phone company for monopoly: “When government pulls its hand out and lets the law of supply and demand work, that law works naturally,” he explained—which was why, he said, a long-distance call used to cost as much as sending 1,376 letters but now cost as much as sending twenty-five.

The tax code should stop being absurd. (“We live in the only country in the world where it takes more sense to figure out your income tax than it does to earn the income.”) The politicians calling for gasoline rationing—they now included Melvin Laird, the conservative former Wisconsin congressman who had been Nixon's defense secretary—“have little faith in you and your neighbors. They assume you and your neighbors won't cut back unless a government dictate forces you to.” Public employees who went out on strike should be fired outright. And then there was the nightmare of living in a socialist country—like Sweden, “where workers resort to barter.” Or France, where “the telephone system is run by the post office.” He made them sound no less repressive than China, where it takes “a year to buy a wristwatch.” Or Finland, home of the formerly great composer Jean Sibelius. Reagan compared him to Mozart, who thrived artistically to the day he died, because he earned his living in a mercantile society, while the twentieth-century Finn never wrote another note once he was awarded a lifetime government pension.

Some days he thundered forth on geopolitics: the foolishness of recognizing Red China; technical discussions of the SALT II arms control talks (“Now I know that I’ve thrown a lot of figures at you and they’re hard to absorb just hearing them at this one broadcast. You can get a copy by writing to the station”); the crucial strategic importance of the Gulf of Aden, with Somalia and South Yemen “both close to being satellites of the Soviet Union.” And to the United Nations’ refusal to call Hanoi on its “cruel game of cat and mouse” in denying knowledge of the “1,300 Americans missing in action”: he still rode that hobbyhorse, too. He cited “our government’s do-nothing approach to the problem,” and the Communists’ refusal to help “search for our missing men” unless the United States ponied up reconstruction money—

> *Well here’s one American who’s not willing to agree to that kind of deal. It’s one thing for a victorious America, generous in victory, to help rebuild a defeated enemy to help strengthen the cause of peace. It’s another thing entirely to pay blackmail to a nation that still counts itself as our enemy, and whose word, as we have learned time and again, cannot be trusted. . . . If we have learned nothing else from the Vietnam debacle, we should have learned the Communists only understand strength, and always take advantage of weakness.*

Other days he attacked inflation, which was always and only caused by excess government spending (if the Congress would only slash spending, he said, neatly dodging the politics of Watergate and Vietnam, it could easily reverse the polls showing “public confidence in the institutions of government could hardly be lower”). The national debt: if it kept growing “you might need a wheelbarrow to cart your money to the grocery store before long.” It all fit together: “As spending for education increased, student test scores have declined,” he said in a late February broadcast. “Discipline has deteriorated. In field after field, generous federal spending has caused more problems than it has solved. What an irony! By refusing to cut spending we’ve contributed to a deterioration of the nation’s social fabric at the same time.”

He was angry. His volume swelled. His incredulity reached a crescendo:

“It’s almost as if we refuse to read the evidence of our senses! Bigger government is not more efficient government. Big government is weak government! Its only strength is its power to bring its weakness, uncertainty, and inefficiency to every corner of American life.

“This is Ronald Reagan. Thanks for listening.”

These were things all conservatives said, if not with the same eloquence and aplomb. Here was the thing that made him different: the gift for moral absolutism. Just like that USS *Midway*—not a death-dealing juggernaut but a cornucopia of Christian love. You had to be a liberal to disagree.

He would ask “if you’re as fed up as I am with all the prophets of doom who have us living in a sick society, wrapped up in selfish materialism.” That was the fault of the liberal media—an institution exercising “both legislative and judicial powers to such an extent that some call them the ‘fourth branch of government’ . . . prosecutor, judge, and jury, all in one.” For instance, he spoke of “any number of stories tucked away in the middle pages of our daily papers, and even more that don’t get printed at all, about an America that’s all about us every day, a different America than the one that’s described by the doom-criers.” For an example, he offered “Rocky’s Story,” which he recorded at the beginning of February. It involved a construction worker traveling with his disabled son. The father discovered after boarding a plane that his wallet was missing. The stewardess began plying the aisles for donations. “The passengers were clapping and cheering.” They handed over $426. The dad, according to Reagan, then burst into tears: “I just forgot people were like that.”

But they *were* like that. That was just the way Americans—*normal* Americans—did things.

And yet dastardly liberals somehow insistently managed to push stories about how Americans did anything but. Stories implying that liberals were the only moral ones. That *you and I*—a favorite Reagan locution, an intimacy-building formulation borrowed directly from FDR’s fireside chats—should somehow feel ashamed. Luckily, here was

Ronald Reagan, melting shame in the warmth of his reassurance. "The trouble with our liberal friends is not that they are ignorant," he liked to say; "it's just that they know so much that isn't so."

On the subject of the plain, simple desire of *you and I* for law and order, for instance. "In the last few years the phrase has become unfashionable. Those who have made it so began looking askance at anyone who used the words. Their arched eyebrows were a reaction to what they had determined was an expression of bigotry. If pressed for an explanation they would inform you that 'law and order' were 'code words' that really meant a call for racial discrimination."

"*Wellll*"—another favored Reaganism, a setup that signaled the debunking to come, frequently followed by "it may surprise you to learn" or "the answer may surprise you," signposting some piece of information that would have been common knowledge were liberal gatekeepers not so skilled in their bamboozling ways—"this inference of bigotry is in itself bigoted. Not only does it impugn without proof the character of the person who uses an appropriate phrase to describe what is all too lacking today, but it casts a slur on an entire racial group"—black Americans, the overwhelming victims of crime, 74 percent of whom according to a "survey done in the nation's capital" wanted tougher action against criminals, compared with 61 percent for whites.

This was like the attempts to shame Americans into boycotting grapes, in support of a strike called by Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers against Gallo Wine. Reagan would know—"I led the first strike our union was ever forced to call. . . . I figured I ought to give this biographical note so there would be no question about my belief about the right of workers to organize, and to strike if necessary." Next came a blizzard of statistics about how these supposedly noble striking martyrs in fact enjoyed fringe benefits "higher than for any other agricultural workers. . . . So enjoy! Have a grape."

Have a grape. Shaming was just was what liberals did. Don't give in. It was liberals who actually were the selfish people. Their schemes pretended to advance democracy, but were actually a conspiracy to subvert it. Had you noticed, for instance, "in recent years, and without our paying attention"—*our:* that loaded word, the people are being victimized by some alien *them*—"it's become easier and easier to become a registered voter?" That just made it "easier and easier for voting blocs to swing elections even though the bloc doesn't represent a majority."

The inflation *their* profligate spending caused: was it not "the cruelest tax, hitting those hardest who can least afford it"?

Those self-righteous environmentalists, "more concerned about nature than people": "home heating is part of our environment, too!"

Indeed liberals' claim to be the ones who cared about poverty was a slur: "No right-thinking person questions our responsibility to lend our less fortunate neighbors a hand but we cannot ignore any longer the harm we are doing to the very people we are trying to help." Harming the poor was what liberals did. For instance, he explained in a series in April, there was the "so-called 'National Welfare Rights Organization'" (another favored trope: "the so-called 'Watergate climate' of last year"; the "so-called haves and have nots"; "so-called 'blacklisting' of people in Hollywood"). The NWRO's true aim, he said, citing a spokeswoman, was expropriation and chaos: "Everyone in this country has a right to share the wealth. The money has gone into the pockets of the middle class, and if we don't get our share, we're going to disrupt this state, this country, and this capital."

This was a flagrant misquotation. What she had actually said was that "the money has gone into the pockets of the middle-class people and made their pockets that much fatter and we are still poor." But no one was checking. It made people feel good. And, as Gerald Ford's struggles governing an ungovernable nation compounded, it was working.

THREE TIMES AT THE BEGINNING OF MARCH, REAGAN WAS FEATURED ON the network news, in report about his political prospects. In the middle of the month he was on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson. The King of Late Night asked the question on everyone's mind: "There's an election coming up, you're out of politics, but you're speaking, and as I say, you're going around the country; um, can you envision a possibility, say in '76, if the convention, say, was deadlocked—I'm giving you all the theories and so forth—and the conservatives took over—"

Cut to Reagan, modestly grinning from ear to ear, as if incredulous at the prospect.

"—and got control of the electoral process, and they couldn't quite make a decision and they came you and said, 'Governor Reagan'—"

He was all but guffawing now, folding his arms, tucking in his chin, glancing over at old Ed McMahon, and just the easy charm of the physical demurral got warm laughs from the studio audience.

"—we're divided, would you like to go to the White House?"

He responded, to peals of laughter, "Do you remember the answer I gave you about the CIA?"

He continued, "Everyone should hope and pray the people there will do such a good job there won't be any question of that." It was an opening a seasoned interviewer could not but exploit: "Do you think they're doing their job well?" Carson asked. Which was a question even a less skilled demurrer could not but knock out of the park. Reagan said he just wanted to see the president balance a budget. How do you do that? Johnny asked. Reagan answered with a favorite joke: "It's like protecting your virtue. You have to say 'no.'"

And the preponderance of a studio audience who hadn't ever considered they might be conservative, confronted with this charming man they were supposed to deplore, applauded and laughed in delight.

On the newsstands, the cover of the March 24 *Newsweek* featured his face, which the article described as "all crinkly and fluttery-eyed when anybody suggests that there might be anything more to his circuit ride than that." It also said he had "become, at least for a season, the most kinetic single presence in American political life . . . and a long-shot challenger to Ford, inside their common party or out, for the Presidency of the United States." It quoted a California conservative as being "disgusted with him for not making the commitment. He's our man, but he just won't come on in." It reported the ecstasy he raised at the closing banquet of that winter's second annual Conservative Political Action Conference at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. The meeting had been dominated by third-party talk among activists, with Ronald Reagan and George Wallace as their dream ticket. They pointed out that the same late 1974 poll that had found only 18 percent of Americans willing to call themselves Republicans discovered 61 percent thought of themselves as conservatives. Reagan had been introduced, to an immediate standing ovation, by the third-party movement's most prominent mover and shaker, *National Review* publisher William Rusher, as "the next President of the United States." He spoke, and raised the roof again: "You can call it mysticism if you want to, but I have always believed that there was some divine plan that placed this great continent between two oceans to be sought out by those who were possessed of an abiding love of freedom and a special kind of courage." And he addressed Bill Rusher's pet idea—only to shoot it down: "Is it a third party that we need, or is it a new and revitalized second party, raising a banner of no pale pastels, but bold colors which could make it unmistakably clear where we stand on all the issues troubling the people?"

Newsweek quoted a moderate Republican who saw him deliver those same lines on the mashed potato circuit in Illinois. It "went over like gangbusters with our crowd," he said. "I don't even like his philosophy, but I sure liked what he said about the party having one."

He had continued, at CPAC, saying, "Americans are hungry to feel once again a mission of greatness." The disappointed true believers who cornered him in corridors to insist that he be the one to lead that mission received in return the same witty gas as Johnny Carson had. "I got the impression," columnist Vic Gold, Spiro Agnew's former press secretary, reported, "that if the fabled Martian visitor had suddenly pancaked his flying saucer into the meeting hall, popped up and demanded, 'Take me to your leader!' Ronald Reagan would have ducked out the back door." "He's too Hollywood," a California editor pooh-poohed to *Newsweek*'s reporter. "He's waiting for someone to come into his dressing room and tell him he's on."

Reagan or no, third party or not, the message a blind-sided political press came away from in that CPAC conclave was the astonishing depths of revulsion against Ford. Jesse Helms said, "Too often the president's program is so bad that even Republicans have difficulty supporting it"—and proposed a platform convention peopled only by conservatives, independent of the ideologically corrupt Republicans, to draft a "second Declaration of Independence." Another speech cited the deficits projected for Ford's next budget. "The shocked reaction," recorded James Wolcott of the *Village Voice*, "suggested billions of charred babies." CPAC participants had scorned Ford for not controlling his wife, who had declared in her first press conference as first lady that she supported abortion rights, and was now quietly lobbying on behalf of the Equal Rights Amendment. ("Betty Ford's problem," said one woman at CPAC, "is that she's taken Eleanor Roosevelt instead of Pat Nixon for the model of what a First Lady is supposed to be.") Robert Bauman, the conservative congressman from Maryland, listed other betrayals: "amnesty for draft dodgers and deserters . . . relentless pushing of détente . . . the elevation to the high office of Vice President of the single most unacceptable nominee one might contemplate—Nelson Rockefeller!" That got a roar second only to the one granted to Reagan.

It all came as a surprise to the pundits. Here was the most conservative president, in many respects, since Harding: a man who had wanted in 1964 to be Barry Goldwater's running mate, and who had been point man in the 1970 effort to impeach the Supreme Court's most liberal justice, William O. Douglas, allegedly for financial regularities but from Ford's rhetoric seemed more for refusing to rule against pornographers, and for being published in a magazine, *Evergreen Review*, that also published arty nudes (Ford called it "hard-core pornography"). No credit for that on the right, apparently; instead, pundits saw conservative activists behaving as if the ordinary act of governing, which is to say compromising, was offensive in and of itself—almost as if they were policing the membership in a tribe. Alongside a flattering profile was a panel by the *Los Angeles Times*' political cartoonist depicting one pachyderm asking another, "Where do elephants go to die?" Why, "Ronald Reagan's ranch," of course. The imperative incessantly invoked when nonconservative Republicans gathered was "broadening the party." But, *Newsweek's* startled correspondent reflected, "the right's idea of broadening the party . . . is purifying it." Reagan said so himself: he found in the "almost two-thirds of the citizens who refused to participate" in last year's congressional elections a longing for conservative principles. "And if there are those who cannot subscribe to these principles," he wound up—that was the line that got him his most thunderous ovation—"then let them go their way."

A curious position to take for an alleged aspirant to lead a party commanding the loyalties of only 18 percent of the electorate.

Certainly the White House could not take this seriously. It hadn't bothered to send a representative to the CPAC. The president received a delegation of eight conservative senators led by Senator James A. McClure of Idaho, leaving them with a noncommittal promise to "maintain communication." Congressional moderates drafted what *Newsweek* called "a blood oath of loyalty to the President and party"; within three days they had the signatures of 113 of 145 GOP congressman and 31 of 38 senators. Ford, who had just hired two joke writers, shortly afterward let loose a zinger: Reagan wasn't too old to be president. His hair was just turning "prematurely orange." Presidential confidant Robert Hartmann assured the media, "Before the leaves fall, we're going to be getting spending bills down here that will have to be vetoed. . . . When he fires about ten bills back, and he's perceived as Horatio at the bridge fighting back against the big spenders, some of the conservatives will moderate their criticism of him."

Then, the Reagan presidential boomlet would be put paid to once and for all.

CHAPTER TWENTY

New Right

FOCUSING ON THE GLITTERING PERSONALITIES, PUNDITS LITTLE NOTICED the right-wing insurgency bubbling barely beneath the surface—what conservatives referred to, like civil rights activists from the 1960s, as "the movement."

Activists in the "pro-life" cause (James Wolcott of the *Village Voice* helpfully explained that the unfamiliar term referred to those fighting against abortion) had been thick on the ground at CPAC. A month before that convention, what *Christianity Today* called "an unexpectedly large turnout" of twenty-five thousand braved the winter chill for the second annual "March for Life," commemorating the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision. The previous year's march had drawn only what the AP had estimated as "hundreds." The flagship evangelical magazine, tending toward sympathy with the pro-lifers, indelicately declared, "No longer can they be dismissed as a group of cold-hearted Catholics simply following orders from the Pope." A Catholic senator, James Buckley, and an evangelical one, Mark Hatfield, introduced a resolution the week of the *Roe* anniversary to extend "the right of life—to all human beings including their unborn offspring." Shortly after, Buckley was joined by the very conservative Southern Baptist, Jesse Helms of North Carolina, to propose the same language as part of a constitutional amendment banning abortion.

Another Catholic-evangelical pairing took place in Washington on March 19. Some 2,500 antibusing activists from fourteen states led by Louise Day Hicks, and a massive contingent bused from Kanawha County, West Virginia, marched from the Washington Monument to the Capitol. One of the fundamentalist preachers who'd led the West Virginia fight, Avis Hill, said, "This is the first time the two big struggles, against busing and dirty textbooks, have stood side by side. This is the beginning of a political rebellion. . . . If they can break us in our mountain home, they can break us in the farm towns of Jefferson County. If they can break us in the streets of South Boston, they can break us anywhere.” Hicks's colleague Raymond Flynn said “the premises are the same . . . the intrusion of the federal government into what was ordinarily considered a local responsibility.” Orated Hicks, “We can never be lambs.” The previous day, representatives of both movements met with officials from the White House Domestic Council, who assured them “that President Ford recognizes their protests as an important issue.”

Then, on April 7, the bishop for the diocese of the four counties surrounding San Diego, representing some 512,000 Catholics, an activist in the city's nonsectarian Pro-Life League, announced priests would refuse Holy Communion to any Catholic who “admits publicly” to membership in the National Organization for Women or any other group advocating abortion: “The issue at stake is not only what we do to unborn children but what we do to ourselves by permitting them to be killed.” He called abortion a “serious moral crime” that “ignores God and his love.” NOW proclaimed this year's Mother's Day a “Mother's Day of Outrage”—in response, it said, to the Roman Catholic hierarchy's “attempt to undermine the right of women to control their own bodies.” The president of Catholics for Free Choice and the Southern California coordinator for NOW's Human Reproduction Task Force, Jan Gleeson, recently returned from Southeast Asia as an Operation Babylift volunteer, clarified the feminist group's position: “It opposes compulsory pregnancy and reaffirms a woman's right to privacy to control her own body as basic to her spiritual, economic, and social well-being.”

“Permitting unborn children to be killed” and “ignoring God and his love,” versus “compulsory pregnancy” and “basic spiritual, economic, and social well-being”: a showdown loomed between irreconcilables, the passions resembling those in a seventeenth-century European religious war.

That Sunday women and men in NOW buttons picketed all day in front of St. Joseph's Cathedral in downtown San Diego. At the lovely missionary-style parish of St. Brigid (patron saint, ironically, of children whose parents are not married), thirty-five were denied the sacrament at the communion rail, others intercepted as they made their way down the aisle. Fifty “pro-choice” members of Women in Law, a feminist student group at the Catholic University of San Diego, picketed at Immaculate Chapel. In one intimate moment captured in the *New York Times*, a priest asked a would-be communicant if she believed in abortion. She replied, “I believe in the law of our land,” and was refused a wafer. Bishop Maher returned from an overseas trip that had included a stop in Saudi Arabia, where he had conferred with Muslim religious leaders, and gave a press conference in which he called his opponents' position “pagan.” He pointed to a stack of supportive messages and predicted his decision would spread nationwide. Messages to the *Los Angeles Times*, taking up the entire letters section, were radically divided: “NOW should perhaps establish its own religion with Herod as their God” and “At last there is someone strong enough to protect the needless slaying of innocent life,” versus “It is clear that the Catholic hierarchy is getting desperate in its frantic efforts to pass a ‘compulsory pregnancy’ amendment to the U.S. Constitution” and “NOW is dedicated to the liberation of the human spirit. . . . Is it this freedom of choice-by-conscience that the bishop can't abide?”

In the midst of the controversy Ronald Reagan recorded a broadcast describing his agonies in signing the nation's most liberal abortion law, in 1967. That process had been a debacle. “Faced with an abundance of contradictory and absolutist advice,” and polls showing that 72 percent of Californians and 59 percent of California Catholics wanted a liberalized abortion law, a Reagan biographer wrote, “Reagan behaved as if lost at sea.” At a news conference two hours before the bill had passed, he complained that its provision granting doctors the right to cite mental health grounds as a medical necessity would make it too easy for abortions to be obtained; then, after signing it into law, he claimed he hadn't even been aware such a mental health “loophole” had existed. On radio, in 1975, he recalled discovering “that neither medicine, law, or theology had ever really found a common ground on the subject. Some believed an unborn child was no more than a growth on the female body and she should be able to remove it as she would her appendix. Others felt a human life existed from the moment a fertilized egg was implanted in the womb.”

Now, however, decrying abortion was a marker of belonging in the conservative tribe. And suddenly, he devised a way to realize it had been simple all along: that “there is a quite common acceptance in medical circles that the cell—let's call it the egg—once it has been fertilized is on its way as a human being with individual physical traits and physical characteristics already determined.”

And yet he insisted the law he signed in 1967 had been just fine, because “[i]n our Judeo-Christian religion, we recognize the right to take life in defense of our own. Therefore an abortion is justified when it is done in self-defense. My belief is that a woman has the right to protect her own life and health against even her own unborn child. I believe also that just as she has the right to defend herself against rape she should not be made to bear a child resulting from that violation of her person and therefore abortion is an act of self-defense.”

No matter that none of that bore any relation to the 1967 law, whose mental health loophole had nothing to do with defense of a mother's life. What was telling about the broadcast was its very existence. The fact that he felt compelled to attempt such gyrations spoke to how important the issue had become. And it spoke, perhaps more than any other sign, to the fact that he was serious about running for president—even more than his public visit to the Annenberg estate in February. Or the trip he made to London in April, when he said the Soviets remained "a serious threat to safeguarding our way of life" and "either we continue the concept that man is a unique human being capable of determining his own destiny, with dignity and God-given inalienable rights, or we admit we are faceless ciphers in a Godless collectivist ant heap." *Pravda*, amused, had reported of the speech that "a dinosaur from the 'cold war' times, by the name of Ronald Reagan, has resurrected and made himself known through bellicose roaring."

He might or might not be aiming at the presidency. But in either case, not everyone was taking him seriously. In the White House, for example, word was that he was considered little more than a joke. The conservative movement wasn't taken seriously, either—even as it grew and grew.

ON MOTHER'S DAY EIGHT HUNDRED PROTESTERS DRESSED IN BLACK WITH red armbands, and carrying signs showing coat hangers dripping in blood, picketed before the Vatican embassy in Washington. The evangelical and Catholic members of Long Beach Voice for the Unborn suspended their twenty-fourth consecutive Sunday picketing the abortionists at Long Beach Memorial Hospital to take up the hospital's invitation to discuss the problem of unwanted pregnancy. The hoped-for meeting of the minds never took off. One eighty-seven-year-old member lambasted the Nineteenth Amendment, granting women the vote; her daughter, agreeing, lambasted the would-be twenty-seventh, the ERA, which she said would establish a federal police force to require women to work outside the home. In San Diego, Anaheim, and Los Angeles, Catholic NOW members staged ceremonies reversing the traditional bell, book, and candle excommunication rite (in Anaheim the "book" was the Constitution and the "bell" was a replica of the Liberty Bell). "At the end," a member of Catholics for the Right to Choose explained, "they snuff out the candle to signify spiritual death. We light the candle to signify life."

Dramatic stuff—though there was no coverage of it on network TV. And new polling by Lou Harris found 54 percent in favor of abortion, at least in the first three months of pregnancy (compared with 38 percent opposed). Pundits didn't find much to say about it, either. The change was registering instead at the level of society's tectonic plates—at the core of America's religious identity.

A certain sort of bland religiosity had expanded enormously in the 1950s. The typical American pursued a faith experience, the sociologist Will Herberg wrote in his influential 1955 book, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, "that reassures him about the existential rightness of everything American, his nation, his culture, and himself." President Eisenhower said, "A system of government like ours makes no sense unless founded on a firm faith in religion—and I don't care what it is." Blandness was supposed to be a good thing; it attenuated cultural conflict, smoothed edges, made a diverse nation united and strong.

The denominations expanding the most, in fact, were the blandest of all—the "mainline" ones: Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, the United Church of Christ (a merger of old Congregationalist denominations), and especially the Episcopalian Church, once mocked as the "Republican Party at Prayer," back when Republicanism was understood as the province of stolid moderation—nothing like the people on display that year at the Conservative Political Action Conference, the ones describing abortion as a holocaust and reduced to frenzies of rage at any mention of that bland man Gerald Rudolph Ford. Who was, of course, an Episcopalian.

When church growth plateaued in the 1960s, the conclusion was immediately drawn: congregants fled pews because churches were no longer "relevant." *Relevant:* a very sixties word. It meant that churches did not resemble the world outside their walls—a changing world, a dynamic world, a world of shifting values and softening mores, a tolerant world, a *liberal* world. The churchmen who rose in denominational counsels were the ones who were leaders in liberal, even radical causes. William Sloane Coffin, since 1958 the chaplain at Yale, went on trial for counseling draft resistance in 1967. Portions of the legal defense of Angela Davis, the Afroed American Communist on trial in 1972 for allegedly providing the weapons to black militants who assassinated a judge, were paid for by the United Presbyterian Church of North America. The Catholic Church's Vatican II reforms of the early 1960s brought in their wake by the late 1960s priests who did not just deliver the liturgy in English instead of Latin, facing the congregation rather than the altar, but did so strumming guitars. Others went further: Lutherans in 1970, reform Jews in 1972, and Episcopalians in 1974 started ordaining women as clergy. "EPISCOPAL LEADERSHIP LISTENS TO ITS MEMBERS;

HEADQUARTERS ADMITS CREDIBILITY GAP," read a 1973 headline in the *Los Angeles Times*—the same year Episcopalians recognized civil divorce. In 1975 they rewrote the Book of Common Prayer, one of the literary monuments of Western civilization. One of the changes was a passage endorsing nonmarital sex.

It didn't work. Between 1965 and 1975 all the old gains in membership were reversed: Lutherans by 5 percent, United Methodists by 10 percent, Presbyterians by 7 percent . . . and, most of all, the Episcopalians, who lost 16.7 percent of their membership. One of the auguries in the pulp paperback *Predictions for 1974* was that the Catholic Church would become more liberal "but will continue to lose supporters at a tremendous rate." That one, unlike the prediction that a submarine and a UFO would collide off the Aleutian Islands, turned out to be true.

At that, the churches responded by struggling frenetically to become more relevant. And by 1975, things began getting ridiculous.

That was the year a Palm Sunday "Circus Mass" was held at Holy Trinity in Washington, D.C.: clowns in baggy pants, midgets, an acrobat balanced atop a pole twenty feet above the altar. Later that April, at the First Unitarian Church in Fort Worth, Texas, Pastor William Nichols invited parishioner Diana King to the pulpit. She announced, "I would like to do a sermon using exotic dance, and members of the congregation could join me if they like." She stripped down to only a G-string. Pastor Nichols later told reporters, "I haven't had one complaint. I feel like exotic dancing is a part of life. It fit very well into our service. We are inheritors of the Victorian ethic which I don't accept. She was expressing herself and I think she got that over to the congregation." He also said no one had been aroused—but if anyone had been, that would have been okay, too: "I don't consider the erotic aspect of the dance wrong. After all, that's the way we were conceived." For Mrs. King's part, asked by a reporter "if she thought her nude dance sparked any feelings other than spiritual," she responded, "I don't know what you mean by 'spiritual.' I don't dance to frustrate people. I create a fantasy. I like to turn people on. I really felt good . . . it's affirming nature and love . . . you can't separate body from mind."

It all became easy to mock. A cartoon in the February 28 issue of *Christianity Today* had Jesus rewriting "He that is without sin": "To confront the moral challenge of the complexities and conflicts of our age will require that we resist the temptations of simple answers and resolve instead to be responsive to and responsible for a moral universe that is characterized by both continuity and open-endedness. . . ." John Updike came out that spring with a new novel, *A Month of Sundays*, in which a wayward minister was sent by his bishop to a rest home. It banned "[a]ll traditions, perhaps orthodox, sources of help for emotional and spiritual healing. But the bar opens at noon. . . . Today is Sunday. Though they try to hide this from us, I can count."

Not everyone mocked. Some, simply, left. They didn't want their churches to be "relevant" to the world outside church walls. The reason they went to church in the first place was to *escape* the world outside church walls—a world that liberals had turned into a madhouse. It was like what Ronald Reagan had said on TV in 1964: "They say the world has become too complex for simple answers. They are wrong. There are no easy answers, but there *are* simple answers. We must have the courage to do what we know is morally right." Those were the churches people were turning to now: the ones that didn't doubt what was morally right.

The Holy Roller Church of the Nazarene grew by 8 percent; the hard-core Seventh-Day Adventists grew by 36 percent; the Pentecostal Assemblies of God by 37 percent. The United Methodists suffered a financial crisis because members were no longer interested in sending money to its Board of Missions. They were sending donations, instead, to organizations like the Good News Movement in Wilmore, Kentucky, a "forum for scriptural Christianity within the United Methodist Church," attacking a "radically new secularized philosophy of mission" that sought social change rather than "bringing persons to salvation through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

Other such tectonic plates were shifting in Washington.

That spring, a Kanawha-style controversy spread through conservative precincts nationwide. In 1964 the Harvard psychologist Jerome Bruner began writing what was intended as a national social science curriculum for middle schoolers, with support from the Ford Foundation and the National Science Foundation. Bruner reasoned that any subject could be taught in a serious way to children of any age, and that people learned best when "actively and thoughtfully operating on their experiences." What he didn't consider, not at all, was politics.

By 1972 his curriculum, "Man: A Course of Study," or MACOS, was being taught to 400,000 students in 1,700 schools. It sought, said its author, to fight "authoritarian attitudes" instilled by rote instruction. It would inculcate open-minded, scientific attitudes of discovery instead. Little social scientists would, for instance, discuss what made humans human by contrasting films of free-ranging baboons with ethnographic films depicting the traditional practices of the Netsilik Inuit—Eskimo—of the frigid arctic. Then they would be invited to grasp the anthropological concept of cultural relativity by comparing Netsilik cosmology and mythology with that they learned at their parents' knee—"to leave their own specific culture to become critically aware of it and to understand culture as a generic human creation," Bruner wrote.

Kind of like, in that textbook adopted by the Kanawha County School Board, the invitation for children to compare the Greek myth of Androcles and the Lion with the scriptural story of Daniel in the lions' den. And at that, Bruner soon found himself in the lions' den.

The first fires were local. In Quincy, Massachusetts, the protest came from the parent-organizers of South Shore Citizens Against Forced Busing, who alleged their children were being indoctrinated in "unsavory and barbaric Eskimo practices." A Houston parent announced that these included "cannibalism, infanticide, genocide, senilicide . . . stabbing, wife-swapping, animal beating, bloodletting, and mating with all kinds of animals." MACOS defenders pointed out these practices were either from a time before the Netsilik made first contact with the outside world in the 1920s, or from plots in Netsilik *myths*. Course materials made it perfectly clear that present-day Inuit deplored them—just as present-day Jews and Christians deplored, say, all the smiting depicted in the Bible. The point, they said, was to shake students from their complacent notion that theirs was the only legitimate way to view the world—a response heard on the right as but more evidence of the moral turpitude of their secular humanist foes. Then the conflagration became national—as cries were once more heard at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, which found in MACOS another convenient exhibit of the wicked federal bureaucracy's conspiracy to undermine the traditional family.

Quotations from a new volume in Heritage's "Public Policy Studies" series, *Man: A Course of Study—Prototype for Federalized Textbooks?* by Connie Marshner's sister-in-law Susan Marshner, soon began showing up on newspaper editorial pages: that MACOS was "an invasion of privacy of children and their parents"; that students were being manipulated, not into open-ended inquiry, but into the heresy "that there are no moral absolutes." "What this means in practice," interpreted an inventive conservative columnist in the newspaper *Southeast Missourian*, "is that a teacher, for example, may not speak out against cheating if cheating is taking place as a result of an individual 'discovery' process."

The fire spread to Capitol Hill—and threatened to engulf the very concept of federal funding for scientific pedagogy itself. John Conlan, a second-term Republican congressman from Arizona who some evangelicals wanted to run for president, and Olin Teague, the conservative

Texas Democrat who chaired the House Committee on Science and Astronautics, opened hearings on April 9 to "reassert congressional authority over NSF curriculum activities to stop what is shaping up as an insidious attempt to impose particular school courses and approaches to learning on local school districts—using the power and financial resources of the Federal Government to set up a network of educator-lobbyists to control education throughout America." Conlan's constituents, apparently, disagreed: a poll of Phoenix parents found only 8 percent opposed the curriculum. But then maybe they just didn't appreciate, as Conlan thundered from the hearing room dais, that MACOS deployed "cultural shock techniques" to cause kids "to reject the values, beliefs, religions, and national loyalties of their parents and American society generally."

He won. That August, Congress scrapped $9 million from the National Science Foundation budget earmarked for summer workshops for a "variety of recently developed courses for elementary and secondary schools." The following January, Conlan introduced an amendment requiring direct review of *all* NSF curriculum projects. Congressmen didn't know why their phones were ringing off the hook concerning this obscure measure. They didn't know that thousands upon thousands of people whose names happened to repose in a computer data bank, because once upon a time they had donated to Barry Goldwater, or because they had responded to an appeal to send Bibles to Africa or had once subscribed to a conservative magazine, were receiving letters signed by Senator Jesse Helms reading, "Your taxes are being used to pay for grade school courses that teach our children that cannibalism, wife swapping, and the murder of infants and the elderly are acceptable behavior." They just knew that their constituents were concerned. Conlan's radical measure narrowly missed passing the House, by a vote of 196 to 215. A new wellspring of political power had announced itself in Washington.

THE EMERGING CONSERVATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE BEGAN WITH BARRY Goldwater's presidential campaign, which ingathered an army—an army that could lose a battle, suck it up, and then regroup to fight a thousand battles more. The failed Goldwater crusade spawned combat divisions in its wake like the American Conservative Union, a lobbying group that was founded a month after Goldwater's defeat, and now was thriving; it put on the massive CPAC convention each year, alongside the conservative youth group Young Americans for Freedom—which was founded in the wake of the *first* effort to run Barry Goldwater for president, in

1960. These were just two spearheads. Eleven years later, their progeny were rich and variegated.

These progeny included an expanding technology of fund-raising and grassroots communication. In 1961 a young man from Houston named Richard Viguerie, who told reporters his heroes were "the two Macs"—Joe McCarthy and General Douglas MacArthur—took a job as executive director of Young Americans for Freedom. That organization itself began as a bit of a con, something of a front for the ideological ambitions of the grown-ups running *National Review*. The middle-aged man who ran the operation from behind the scenes, Marvin Liebman, was an ideological P. T. Barnum figure, famous on the right for selling the claim that he had amassed a million signatures on petitions opposing the People's Republic of China's entry into the United Nations. (He said they were in a warehouse in New Jersey. No one ever saw the warehouse.) The first thing Liebman told Viguerie was that YAF had two thousand paid members but that in public, he should always claim there were twenty-five thousand. And the first thing that Liebman showed Viguerie was the automated "Robotype" machine used to send out automated fund-raising pitches. Viguerie's eyes widened; he had found his life's calling.

Following Goldwater's defeat, Viguerie went into business for himself. He visited the clerk of the House of Representatives, where the identities of those who donated fifty dollars or more to a presidential campaign were filed. First alone, then with a small army of female temp workers, he started copying down names and addresses in longhand—until a nervous civil servant told him to cease and desist, by which point he had captured thousands of names of the most ardent right-wingers in the nation. Soon, so many unsolicited form letters were being sent over Ronald Reagan's signature that the former governor had to write personal letters to friends apologizing for them. In 1968, Viguerie raised by mail an unheard-of $6 million for George Wallace's presidential run, 76 percent of the campaign's income; in 1970 and 1971 he raised $2.3 million for the antismut group Citizens for Decent Literature (some 84 percent of the money went back into Viguerie's company, though a conservative group that decided to do the same work in-house discovered it could raise funds for fifty cents on the dollar). Then he pulled in $7 million to retire George Wallace's 1972 campaign debt—and his client list grew and grew.

And in May 1975, after trying and failing to buy *Human Events*, Viguerie began publishing *Conservative Digest: A Magazine for the New Majority*, sending out as a subscription premium five thousand copies of William Rusher's third-party manifesto *The Making of a New Majority Party*. The appeal put the presidency in its sights: "Our country, which badly needs a strong Winston Churchill, is stuck with a weak Gerald Ford." The New Right now had the germ of its own media.

Conservatives also enjoyed an expanding cadre of national newspaper columnists. The latest was Patrick J. Buchanan—appropriately, since one of his jobs in the Nixon White House had been to shame media executives into spasms of contrition for tilting their organs to the left. He had returned to the news briefly the day before Nixon's resignation when it was reported he had written a memo advising the president to burn the White House tapes. A few weeks after that, Alexander Haig begged the new president to honor Buchanan's dear wish to become America's ambassador to South Africa. (Ford did not find that a wise idea.) Instead, in the spring of 1975, his column debuted, syndicated, ironically enough, by the New York Times Company, with a piece on a tax bill just passed by the House. "The redistribution of wealth, downward, is what much of this $21.3 billion worth of 'tax relief' is about," he wrote, complaining that the 4.6 million Americans it dropped from the tax rolls would be "reassigned to that expanding army of citizens who pay nothing in federal income taxes for the broad and widening array of social benefits they enjoy," contributing to "a new class in America, a vast constituency of millions with no interest whatsoever in reducing the power of government, and every incentive to support its continued growth."

That particular argument of Buchanan's was amplified in an unlikely quarter: by a former Trotskyite, more recently an enthusiastic liberal, now writing a column in the *Wall Street Journal* as the public face of a new rightward intellectual tendency. Like many prominent right-leaning intellectuals, Irving Kristol was a Jewish veteran of ideological combat in the lunchroom alcoves at the Depression-era City College of New York, where Stalinists did battle with Trotsykists and honed an ideological fierceness resembling that of public intellectuals in Europe. Bouncing around from publication to publication, he became a liberal increasingly adept at lacerating liberal pieties—for instance, writing in an essay titled "Civil Liberties 1952—A Study in Confusion," that "there is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy: he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing." By 1965 he was editing a new magazine, the *Public Interest*, inaugurated in 1965 and financed by a former CIA agent who was now a stockbroker. It specialized in social-science debunkings of Great Society social programs. Its editor was soon on his way to what the democratic socialist Michael Harrington dubbed in 1973 “neoconservatism.” And in his May 19, 1975, *Wall Street Journal* column, Kristol published one of neoconservatism’s most influential texts. In capital letters, it named, and shamed, what he called capitalism’s “New Class”: the self-aggrandizing stewards of the welfare state. They were really not much interested in helping people, “but keenly interested in power. Power for what? Well, the power to shape our civilization—a power which, in a capitalist society, is supposed to reside in the free market. This ‘new class’ wants to see much of the power redistributed to the government, where they will then have a major say in how it is exercised.” Then, niftily reversing the traditional understanding that it was rich capitalists whose democratic loyalties were suspicious, Kristol concluded that this “elitist new class” was “hostile to the market precisely because the market is so vulgarly democratic—one dollar, one vote.”

Another figure who seemed on his way to becoming a neoconservative was in the news. Daniel Patrick Moynihan was a former Harvard professor who as a Labor Department official under Lyndon Johnson became a lightning rod for criticism by proposing that “the fundamental source of weakness in the Negro community at the present time” was the “tangle of pathologies” inherent in the black family—not, say, a lack of jobs. He became the focus of controversy again as a special assistant in the White House when a 1970 memo he wrote leaked. It argued that a period of “benign neglect” was the best response to racial problems. A blunt, outspoken man, an intellectual: rare in politics. He nonetheless kept rising in the Washington firmament. On May 21, President Ford announced his intention to nominate Moynihan as ambassador to the United Nations—even as a Moynihan essay in a recent issue of *Commentary*, the flagship neoconservative magazine, argued that radical, malevolent Third World elements, resource-rich and puffed up by OPEC’s example, were taking over the world body, telling the First World what to do, and that it was “time that the American spokesman came to be feared.” A UPI profile explained the stakes: “Moynihan’s policy prescription could throw him into direct confrontation with Third World leaders when the UN General Assembly holds a special session next September to consider organizational changes and demand improved economic relationships between rich and poor nations.”

On the broader right, more and more “think tanks” emerged to provide intellectual ballast, or in some cases just the appearance of intellectual ballast, to the conservatives on the editorial pages—and on the radio, where Ronald Reagan, who for instance got raw material

for his rant about “Polish bisexual frogs” from an outfit called the National Taxpayers Union. Sometimes Reagan promoted the new groups outright—for instance, the Pacific Legal Foundation, a corporate-funded outfit he described to his listeners in June as “a young public interest legal group that has some powerful ax-grinders on the run . . . defending government in one case, and protesting it in another . . . wherever the broader public interest might lie.” The bad guys said to be fighting the public interest included “hyper environmental groups” opposing the building of a Trident submarine base on Puget Sound, who “seem to conveniently forget that freedom is every bit as fragile and irreplaceable as any given ecological system”; and the EPA bureaucrats he said were trying to create deliberate traffic jams to keep people from using cars; and, naturally, the “so-called ‘welfare rights’ groups,” which served the interests only of grifters like one “Linda Taylor, the champion welfare cheat of all time. She used eighty aliases and fifty addresses to defraud thirteen states of more than half a million dollars.”

“It’s good to know that you and I are not entirely at the mercy of those special interests who seek to spend our tax money and bend and interpret the laws to their own special points of view!”

The corporate-funded organizations fighting alleged special interests were housed mostly in and around Washington—but also in places like the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. The institution was founded in 1959 by the namesake former president widely considered responsible for the Great Depression with a statement asserting, “The purpose of this institution must be, by its research and publications, to demonstrate the evils of the doctrines of Karl Marx.” The institution was featured in a spread in the summer of 1975 in the *Los Angeles Times* noting its $3.5 million annual budget, its handsome new underground building, and that “[i]n recent months the work of Hoover scholars in several domestic fields, among them taxation, government regulation, and healthcare, has been favorably mentioned by Ford administration officials.” Its fellows were busy “shuttling back and forth to Washington, testifying before congressional committees and serving as advisors to various federal agencies.” Its director, W. Glenn Campbell, was asked about the Stanford faculty members who had tried to shut it down as inconsistent with academic canons of free inquiry. He responded, “If you are asking me if we consider ourselves to be in the liberal academic mainstream, my answer is, ‘I hope not because that’s disastrous for the country.’”

They were forging new engines for electoral organizing, too. In suburban Rosslyn, Virginia, the four full-time and forty part-time organizers of the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) were hard at work raising what would add up to $3 million from conservative donors to build off-the-shelf campaign apparatus for conservative candidates in 1976: press agentry, TV and print ads, campaign consultants, and even campaign managers. The direct mail pitches to raise the funds came from Richard Viguerie's shop. The one on "grade school courses that teach our children that cannibalism," signed by Jesse Helms, the former boss of NCPAC principal Charlie Black, was one of its solicitations; explained executive director Terry Dolan, a former Young Republicans activist, "The shriller you are, the better it is to raise money." Another principle, Roger Stone, former head of the District of Columbia Young Republicans, had been a dirty tricks specialist: he had shown up in the Ervin Committee investigations for hiring a spy who infiltrated the McGovern campaign and reported to Stone; and for sending a two-hundred-dollar donation to the campaign of a liberal Republican running against Nixon in the 1972 New Hampshire primary in the name of the Young Socialist Alliance (he then sent the receipt to Manchester's *Union Leader* so it would report that Nixon's rival was a Red). Dolan later explained to a reporter one of NCPAC's raisons d'être: "We could say whatever we want about an opponent of a Senator Smith and the senator wouldn't have to say anything. A group like ours could lie through its teeth and the candidate it helps stays clean."

Then there was the "Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress," assembled by a Heritage Foundation cofounder from Wisconsin named Paul Weyrich, who from a renovated Capitol Hill carriage house was about to send one hundred thousand letters over Senator James McClure's signature, using Viguerie's mighty mailing lists, appealing for $2 million to defeat a hundred "of the most liberal, anti-business and pro-welfare congressmen," with Bella Abzug and Berkeley's black socialist Ron Dellums topping the list. ("Although the fund-raising letter was written on McClure's U.S. Senate stationery," the AP reported in a June profile on Weyrich's new group, "the senator claimed little knowledge of who the targeted congressmen are or why they were selected.")

Weyrich's money came primarily from a single source: the Coors brewing family of California, whose youngest scion, Joseph, the *Washington Post* reported in a profile, "has been pumping millions of dollars a year into new national organizations with headquarters in the East, designed to push the United States politically to the right." These included Weyrich's Committee for a Free Congress, the Heritage Foundation, the right-wing business groups the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Federation of Independent Businesses, and conservative cells in both chambers of Congress, the House Republican Study Committee, and the Committee of Nine in the Senate—whose "only contributions last year came from the Coors family." (Reagan, for his part, did a favor for Coors with a radio broadcast deploring a federal judicial ruling against one of the company's business practices; one of his political aides in Sacramento, Robert Walker, was now a Coors vice president.) Coors, Weyrich told the *Post*, "Is a man who believes more deeply than anybody I have ever met, except religious monks. When things go wrong that he feels deeply about, he's like a child . . . in sorrow and grief over what's going on, and a frustration over his inability to do anything about it." So he started doing something about it.

Another fledgling ideological force founded by Weyrich got its eighty thousand dollars in seed funding from a rich scion of the old Mellon banking clan. The American Legislative Exchange Council had been a rather sleepy alliance of right-leaning state legislators; its tax status was "501(c)3"—which is to say, a charitable organization whose value as a tax write-off for donors relied on its not getting involved in direct political participation. Of a sudden, its executive director, an Illinois Republican activist named Juanita Barnett, found her group the beneficiary of Richard Mellon Scaife, a Pittsburgh billionaire who'd donated $1 million to Richard Nixon's reelection campaign and whose plaything was the newspaper of a little Pennsylvania town, the *Greensburg Tribune-Review*. Once, when he'd heard one of his reporters celebrating the resignation of Spiro Agnew, he had him fired on the spot. His political ambitions were bigger now. When Barnett asked Weyrich what could possibly make her shell of an organization worth eighty thousand dollars, he responded, basically, that it was worth that much precisely *because* it was a shell of an organization: "Juanita, ALEC is the *only* state legislative organization in the country—of our persuasion—which has a 501(c)3. If they took ALEC to Washington and did a good job, they . . . could go back to Scaife and get Scaife to set up a political Action Committee to finance state legislative campaign races." In other words, ALEC could be a "nonpolitical" Trojan horse for right-wing political activity. It worked: dismissing the meddlesome Juanita Barnett, they set up shop both in Washington and in the rent-free office of a conservative Illinois state representative, whose phone lines they illegally made use of, and began writing model bills for state legislatures, unnoticed by the press until 1978.

Meanwhile, battles were raging for and against the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any

State on account of sex," ran its apparently anodyne text. The majority of the public supported the idea; respectable moderate Republican women being its main base of support, the Republicans had endorsed it in every one of their party platforms since 1944 and President Eisenhower had asked a joint session of Congress to approve it in 1958. Congress did so, finally, in 1972—at which the movement to achieve the constitutional requirement of approval in two-thirds of state legislatures, thirty-eight to be precise, took off like a rocket, with thirty ratifications by the end 1973.

Then, the progress became like molasses.

Only four more states voted passage by that spring. One reason was a frantic right-wing movement that sprang nearly fully formed from the brow of a single, brilliant, indefatigable middle-aged woman from suburban Alton, Illinois. Phyllis Schlafly had been an accomplished conservative activist since not long after she received her master of business administration degree from Harvard University in 1945. In becoming so accomplished, she mastered a dubious mode of public presentation later adopted to great effect by leaders such as Louise Day Hicks in South Boston and Alice Moore in Kanawha County: just an innocent housewife, went her story, going about her business raising a family like any other, when her sudden shocked discovery of alien impositions on home and hearth by left-wing conspiracists forced her out of her kitchen and into the spotlight as a reluctant warrior for decency. Brochures for Schlafly's 1952 congressional run, in fact, depicted her cooking breakfast in an apron—a housewife identity belied by the fact that she was running for Congress, and held a master's degree from Harvard, but she never let the contradiction detain her. Instead she leveraged it to become perhaps the most effective organizer the right had ever known.

Her signature issue, running for Congress and afterward, had been anti-Communism; her newsletter, the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, launched in 1967 after the respectable moderate women who so doted on the ERA defeated her for president of the National Federation of Republican Women, bristled with McCarthyite accusations of Communist infiltration in high places. She was riveted by the arcana of geopolitics and nuclear doctrine (here, she obsessively claimed that the strategic preference of Robert McNamara for missiles over bombers was actually a stealth plot to disarm the United States) and was obsessed with the anti-American wickedness of the United Nations; when she thought about the ERA at all, she later said, she considered it "something between innocuous and mildly helpful."

That was then. Now, from the vantage of her brand-new organization the Eagle Forum (because "the eagle is almost the only creature that keeps one mate for a lifetime"), she was convinced that the Equal Rights Amendment was the worst outrage the liberals had yet conceived. She set to work convincing the rest of the world.

The ERA, she argued, would "take away the right of young women to be exempt from the draft." It would "invalidate the state laws that make it the obligation of the husband to support his wife financially." It would "wipe out the right to receive Social Security benefits based on her husband's earnings." It would legalize—nay, encourage—homosexual marriages and adoptions. It would "remake our laws, revise the marriage contract, restructure society, remold our children to conform to liberal values instead of God's values, and replace the image of woman as virtue and mother with the image of prostitute, swinger, and lesbian." It would require the Catholic Church "to admit women to the priesthood and to abandon its single-sex schools . . . or else lose its tax exempt status."

An Illinois state representative who joined the crusade rumbled, "Put it on the heads of your children and your grandchildren and watch and witness the decline of the United States of America, a great country that was founded on the principle of family units. In Colorado, where they have ERA, men want to marry horses. Homosexuals marry homosexuals there. This is what you're talking about with ERA." And, in a charge that seemed to galvanize conservative imaginations most of all, critics insisted it would legally ban the institution of separate restrooms for men and women. As one terrified Florida woman told her state senator, "I do not want to share a public restroom with black or white hippie males."

A powerful nerve had been touched. Phyllis Schlafly was adept at touching nerves. She would claim later that it was her husband, a lawyer, who first helped her appreciate the dangers the ERA foretold. That may or may not be true. But, as with that devastatingly effective husband-and-wife team in the textbook movement who insisted that the media refer to them as the "Mel Gablers," the notion that the antifeminist activist served at the instigation, and pleasure, of the man of the house nicely served the story of the traditional family under siege she was so effectively able to tell: that the barnstorming housewife activist left the home only to *preserve* the home; that traditional bourgeois hierarchies actually preserved liberties and it was the "liberals" who subverted them. It all seemed so maddeningly illogical to her feminist adversaries that they could never contain their rage when they were around her ("I'd like to burn you at the stake!" fumed NOW founder Betty Friedan at a 1973 debate)—which only, of course, helped her cause some more.

By the spring of 1975, however, it all sounded logical enough to the burgeoning armies of the right. For instance, to the antibusing activists of Boston. On April 9, they took over a pro-ERA meeting a Faneuil Hall sponsored by the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. Elaine Noble, the first openly lesbian state legislator, took the podium; ROAR women drowned her out with the chant "We like men! We like men!"

A genteel feminist lectured ROAR's Pixie Palladino: "You are our guest, and if you don't behave, I'll have to ask you to leave."

"No!" Pixie snarled back at the alien imposition, plainly from Brahmin Wellesley or some such. "You're *our* guests, this is *our* City Hall. No bunch of ladies from the suburbs is going to kick the women of Boston out of their own City Hall."

Spring, 1975: a conservative coming-out. Southern evangelical Protestants and orthodox Catholics, both traditionally Democratic, fighting shoulder to shoulder to protect the "unborn"; an aggressive, expanding "New Right" of conservative politicians, making a run at the very legitimacy of the Republican Party; sophisticated former liberals, "neoconservatives," adding their voice in all the right cosmopolitan precincts; parents agitating against the liberal bureaucrats who were deforming their children with busing and coed bathrooms and secular humanist hokum—a *coalition*.

IT WAS ONE THAT, HOWEVER, THE *NEW YORK TIMES* FOUND EASY TO DISmiss. That summer the newspaper of record did a feature article about textbook fights fanning out nationwide like brooms in the Sorcerer's Apprentice story. It quoted an education publisher: "This thing has spread since the West Virginia outbreak to the point that there is not an educational publisher who has not made at least one minor revision in the face of pressure." But not to fear, the *Times* assured its liberal-minded readers: "The protesters constitute only a few thousand of the millions of parents with children in the nation's public schools"; the organizations coordinating the protest "include the John Birch Society, the Ku Klux Klan . . . and the Heritage Foundation." Yoking the mainstream conservative group that was becoming a constant presence on Capitol Hill to the frightening fringe that burned crosses in the woods made it hard to see this sort of thing as the leading wedge of anything serious at all.

What the *Times* missed was the political undercurrent. This was supposed to be a skeptical age. But the longing for the conservative innocence Ronald Reagan was selling was strong, for those with eyes to

see, in all sorts of quarters. Three panels, in the House and the Senate and under the auspices of Vice President Rockefeller, were hard at work behind closed doors investigating epic abuses of public trust by the nation's intelligence agencies. Lillian Hellman, the left-wing playwright, lectured Columbia University graduates in a commencement speech reprinted in the *New York Times:* "You who are graduating today, far more than those who graduated in the sixties, have very possibly lived through the most shocking period in American history . . . you know that government agencies—the CIA, the FBI, the Department of Justice, and God knows what yet hasn't come to light—have spied on innocent people who did nothing more than express their democratic right to say what they thought. You have read that the CIA has not only had a hand in upsetting foreign governments it did not like, it has very possibly been involved in murder, or plots to murder. Murder. We didn't think of ourselves that way once upon a time."

In turn, Rockefeller commission member Ronald Reagan granted absolution on the radio: "Isn't it time to ask if we aren't threatened more by the people the FBI and CIA are watching than we are by the FBI and the CIA?" A House member explained that really, no one cared. "This is not the Watergate investigation. Nobody ever talks to me about it on home trips, and I hear very little about it here."

Cultural undercurrents pointed toward this right-leaning longing for innocence, too. In April, twenty-five red-white-and-blue train cars pulled out of Cameron Station in Alexandria, Virginia, set to streak through all forty-eight continental states in 1976, the bicentennial year for the signing of the Declaration of the Independence. Display cases on the side of some of the Freedom Train's cars featured artifacts of American politics; other cars were entirely encased in transparent material—mobile museum vitrines, displaying the glories of God's chosen nation: a lunar rover, the first horseless carriage to win a transcontinental race, the first typewriter, a Polaroid camera. And a replica of the Liberty Bell, twice the size of the original, donated by the American Legion. Every cent was paid by corporate contributions, General Motors, Kraftco, and Prudential Life Insurance contributing $1 million each. Reagan lionized its private sponsorship as a "miracle in this day of government organized, planned, and managed activity. . . . Where else but in America could this happen? Come to think of it, how many places are left in the world where there is that much freedom to celebrate?"

Early in May, the Columbia University Board of Trustees, which oversaw the selection of Pulitzer Prizes, snubbed its advisory board's selection of Seymour Hersh's blockbuster CIA exposé. Its other selections were anodyne; the trustees "seemed to go out of their way," *Time* observed, "to find relatively noncontroversial subjects." The press, newly emboldened after taking down a president, was supposed to be the headquarters of the new suspicious circles—*The New Muckrakers*, according to the title of a book by the *Washington Post*'s Leonard Downie Jr. Its back cover boomed out: "There is a new kind of American reporter. He does more than record news. He makes history." The book quoted Downie's colleague Bob Woodward: "It's almost a perverse pleasure. I like going out and finding something that is going wrong." But it felt to some as though there had been enough of all that.

As a historian later reflected, Hersh's "early determination to carry the Watergate mentality into the post-Watergate era made his colleagues uncomfortable and even angry"—even, or especially, at the *Washington Post*, which seemed to be shrinking back from its reputation for making history, as if in guilt. The *Post*'s publisher, Katharine Graham, told the Magazine Publishers Association that reporters were becoming "too much a party to events. . . . To see a conspiracy and cover-up in everything is as myopic as to believe that no conspiracies or coverups exist." Its editor Ben Bradlee worried that "these tendencies to develop a social, messianic role for the media, when added to the already feverish drive for the sensationalist story and the scoop, [will] lead to further dispositions that should concern us." And the *Post*'s intelligence beat reporter immediately hit his *Times* counterpart's CIA scoops for a "dearth of hard facts"—even though, in subsequent months, every one of its claims had been vindicated and more. Late in March, Leslie Gelb of the *Times* reflected in the *New Republic* on the reasons for the rest of the media's reluctance to pick up on the CIA story: a history of coziness between the press and the clandestine service "going back to the days of the OSS"; a culture of "long established social relationships"; and even more significantly, a discomfort that the "Stain of Watergate" was "spreading out to the past, to the pre-Nixon years, and to the future. The dream of being able to make Nixon vanish and keep everything else was coming into jeopardy."

And indeed, shortly after that was written, every major media outlet in the nation acceded to a CIA request not to report a story about a failed CIA project to pay $350 million to Howard Hughes to manufacture a salvage vehicle, the Glomar Explorer, for a sunken Soviet submarine. And when the maverick syndicated investigative reporter Jack Anderson *did* finally report the debacle, most outlets reframed it as a heroic triumph—"The Great Submarine Snatch," reported *Time*, taking the opportunity to editorialize that the congressional intelligence investigations could irreparably harm future such missions. When CIA director William Colby came calling, *Esquire*'s William Greider complained, a supposedly "adversarial" press "rolled over on its back to have its tummy rubbed."

A bereft nation had just lost its first war; change was everywhere; and, quietly, Americans were hugging any excuse not to change. The federal government announced a commitment to replace America's outdated, irrational weights and measures—pounds, inches, quart, the "English" system, which even the English didn't use anymore—with the international "metric" standard—kilograms, meters, liters. A leader of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers predicted, "There will be massive resistance"—as if some liberal bureaucrat were forcing his kid to be bused to a black school, or learn about Eskimo cannibalism: "What we have here is engineers and scientists trying to make important social and economic change." The June issue of *Texas Monthly*, the magazine for the Lone Star State's hip young professionals, reported in one article on the graduates of the Class of '75, for whom "the romanticism of the Sixties seems to have lost most of its charm, leaving in its place a rush to security." They were returning "to beer and fraternities and sororities. . . . There is also some recognition and perhaps even a dose of respect for, yes, Dad and Mom"—for economic reasons if nothing else: their parents' generation "by and large managed to find and hold jobs." Another article tracked "The New Woman: Returning to Submission." She appeared on the cover, smiling and neatly coiffed, enfolded within a ball and chain. "Will the new trend in male-female roles be the old trends—dominant man, submissive wife, obedient kids?"

January had seen the debut of a TV version of *American Graffiti*: a slapstick sitcom about high school kids in 1950s Milwaukee hanging out at the diner, listening to doo-wop music, zooming around in hot rods (Potsie: "How about seat belts?" Ralph: "What are seat belts?" "It's safety. Pilots wear them. I read about 'em in *Popular Mechanics*")—and, unlike those bothersome real-life teenagers in 1975, not having sex. In the pilot the protagonist, baby-faced, red-haired Richie Cunningham (the same actor who starred as little Opie on *The Andy Griffith Show*) fretted over a date he had coming up. She had a "reputation": "I've just never dated a girl who's gone out with a sailor before." Not to worry: they end up playing chess. The show, called, unsubtly, *Happy Days*, was an enormous hit. It was especially popular among children.

THEN, THREE WEEKS AFTER THE FALL OF SAIGON, CAME THE SAGA OF THE USS *Mayaguez*. A month earlier, Henry Kissinger was quoted as saying that “the United States must carry out some act somewhere in the world which shows its determination to continue to be a world power.” Now he and the president would have their chance.

On May 12 a rusty merchant ship called the *Mayaguez* was captured somewhere off the coast of Cambodia, near the island of Koh Tang, having strayed, the new Khmer Rouge government claimed, out of international waters and into its territory. Cambodia being a nation in chaos, communications were sketchy, negotiations difficult. But once upon a time, such dilemmas were not beyond the wit of American officials—for instance in the tiny South American nation of Ecuador, which had seized twenty-three U.S. ships in disputed waters over the previous two decades. Our government had just paid fines to release them, and that had been that.

But South America was not Southeast Asia, and Southeast Asia was the region that had just robbed America of its manhood.

At a National Security Council meeting, the president’s most trusted aide, Bob Hartmann, advised, “We should not think of what is the right thing to do, but what the public perceives.” Kissinger said it was time to “draw the line.” At a meeting the next night, when no one yet knew where the ship’s thirty-nine crewmen were or whether they were in actual jeopardy, Kissinger averred, “I think we should seize the island, seize the ship, and hit the mainland . . . people should have the impression that we are potentially trigger happy.” The secretary of state had been steeled—armored by nostalgia for a time when U.S. force was an unmitigated good. He had just returned from Independence, Missouri, after visiting with Bess Truman, marinated in all the old Truman legends—not least the one about the thirty-third president’s uncomplicated, unapologetic defenses of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. “Give ’em hell, Henry!’” a neighbor of the Trumans shouted Kissinger’s way.

Back in Washington, at an NSC meeting, someone asked about the new War Powers Act: should Congress be consulted? Ford responded that he would order the strike and deal with the legal implications later.

A Marine landing party stormed the beaches of Koh Tang, as though it were Iwo Jima in 1945—and, meeting heavy resistance, lost fifteen men and eight helicopters. American forces found and boarded the *Mayaguez*; it was abandoned. A Navy pilot spotted white flags waving from a fishing boat—the crew, safe and sound, ready for rescue.

But the White House was not ready to declare victory yet. “Tell them to bomb the mainland,” Kissinger said. “Let’s look ferocious.” So they did, with B-52s. And by the time it was over, there were forty-nine American military deaths, eighty-two total casualties, eight helicopters destroyed. Thirty hostages “rescued”—though it had never been established that it was the Cambodians’ intention to keep them. “They were so nice, really kind,” a crew member told reporters. “They fed us first and everything. I hope everybody gets hijacked by them.” He should have hoped nobody got rescued by Ford. Later, when documents on the mission were declassified, it emerged that when Ford ordered the bombings, he hadn’t known where the men were, and that they might well have ended up as victims of it.

No matter. It had been a *Happy Days* sort of invasion: nostalgic splendor, armed force as cultural platitude. Conservatives loved it. “It was wonderful,” Barry Goldwater said. “It shows we’ve still got balls in this country.” Columnist Jeffrey Hart wrote that the “details are irrelevant. It proved that the U.S. government is not paralyzed, and that, in particular, President Ford is capable of acting decisively and with broad support.”

But then, most of America loved it, too. Reflected a historian, “The recapture of a single ship was thus said to outweigh and offset the consequences and significance of the defeat of a national government whose independence we had helped to establish and whose integrity we had supported through nearly twenty years of diplomatic, economic, and military aid and for whose sake we had fought a long and costly war.” And unlike kerfuffles over abortion and the teaching of Eskimo myths to fifth graders, the putative military triumph made the cover of every newsmagazine. *Newsweek*, the most liberal, called it “a daring show of nerve and steel.” *Time*’s cover pictured the president looking resolute, and exulted, “Ford Draws the Line.” His approval rating shot up 11 points—the president was finally back up to 50 percent. He started getting standing ovations on his travels. The conservative columnist John Chamberlain predicted that would be it for the Reagan-for-president boom. So did Evans and Novak. Presidential aides put word out to pundits “that Mr. Ford nailed down the Republicans nomination the night he called out the Marines.”

And then, for poor old Gerald Ford, it was back to the burdens of governing.

On May 22, the papers reported America was depending more on foreign oil than it was before the 1973 Arab oil embargo. On May 27, sitting at the presidential desk, he went on TV to address the issue. One by one, he ripped sheets from the calendar:

"Now, what did the Congress do in February about energy? Congress did nothing. . . .

"What did the Congress do in March? What did the Congress do in April about energy? Congress did nothing. . . .

"So what has the Congress done in May about energy? Congress did nothing and went home for a 10-day recess. . . ."

But what could *Gerald Ford* do about energy? The statesmanlike thing, he insisted: increase prices on purpose. He suggested a new one-dollar-per-barrel fee on foreign crude oil—which might or might not achieve its goal of discouraging consumption of imported fuel, but certainly would make fuel more expensive. He got into the strange technicalities of "old" and "new" domestic oil—the latter subject to price controls, the former not, a complex regulatory workaround left over from the Nixon administration, which had ended up having the perverse effect of creating additional incentives for refiners to import—and explained how he would "decontrol" the new stuff by August. Critics said that this would not just make fuel more expensive but add a new inflationary force to the economy as a whole—which the administration acknowledged was true. Without explanation, he asked for "a windfall profits tax with a plowback provision"—whatever, viewers at home had to be asking themselves, that meant. And there was still the looming threat of another Mideast embargo, which Henry Kissinger was desperately trying to forestall in an international energy conference in Paris. "Indeed," *Time* wrote after the speech, "the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries may hike world prices by as much as $2 per barrel in September—a move that would give the American economy a vicious double jolt if Congress and the President let all U.S. price controls die a month earlier."

So much more easy to be Ronald Reagan. Just get rid of all the regulations, he had told *Newsweek* in March. "Then you have competition and the marketplace takes care of itself." As he put it on the radio around the time of Ford's speech, excess government spending was the sole cause of inflation: "It's time for us all to realize that government is not the answer to our economic problems. Government *is* the problem." The messy wages of governance, meanwhile, with all its damned-if-you-do-or-don't dead ends, were solely his rival Gerald Ford's to enjoy.

Four days after his energy speech, Ford landed in Europe for a series of state visits and a meeting with President Anwar Sadat of Egypt on the supremely delicate question of Middle East peace. A rainy morning, a sleepless night, his arthritic football knee acting up and one hand occupied with an enormous umbrella and the other steadying his wife, who

was wearing a jaunty angled Barbara Stanwyck–style hat, they strode down the stairs after Air Force One pulled up on a runway in Austria; presently, he thumped down and collapsed in a heap a step above the tarmac. "Thank you for your gracious welcome to Salzburg—and I am sorry that I tumbled in," he joked. Eight hours later, descending a carpeted stairway at the sixteenth-century former residence of Salzburg's archbishops, he tumbled again, this time beside Sadat—who quickly took his arms and helped him down the remaining twenty steps. Six weeks later, the headline from Kincheloe Air Force Base in Michigan read "SLIPS AGAIN": this time, he fell while walking *up* the stairs to Air Force One.

Slips Again: an indelible image to replace the one of the conqueror of Koh Tang Island. His approval rating was back to 45 percent by summer—a summer, once more, of suffusing dread.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Weimar Summer

IN THE SUMMER OF 1975, JUST LIKE THE WINTER OF 1974, PATRONS WERE waiting in interminable lines to see a scary movie. But this time, unlike those for *The Exorcist*, the lines didn't come to the studio as a surprise. The spur driving people to stand in them wasn't word of mouth but a more novel medium of cinematic promotion: TV commercials—which exploited a masterful score by the composer John Williams, and its creepingly propulsive, suspense-laden riff: *Dah-tum. Dah-tum. Dah-tum dahtum dahtumdahtumdahtum*... And they weren't stretching around urban blocks. The lines were inside air-conditioned suburban shopping malls, which hosted a new sort of theater with half a dozen screens or more, called "multiplexes."

Jaws marked the beginning of an end—the end of a risky, radical period in American moviemaking in which considerable faith was placed in what one critic called "unknown filmmakers and unclassifiable screenplays." Movies made for grown-ups, movies that aspired to art. Now, though, America was inching to the right, so was Hollywood: after thirty years of disarray brought on by the Paramount Decree, the collapse of the old factory system of movie production, studios had been tinkering with formulas for manufacturing blockbusters. This latest hit was the movie version of a wildly popular book, like *Love Story*, like *The Godfather*, like *The Exorcist*. And in contrast to the timid way Warners booked *The Exorcist* (fearing a religious picture wouldn't sell; this was supposed to be a skeptical age), *Jaws* opened on hundreds of screens at once, so viewers would know in advance that it was supposed to be an "event."

All the same, this was still the entertainment business. And, in the months and weeks before its June 20 debut, the old Hollywood truism about how it was impossible to predict the success of a new production haunted the director, the producer, the actors: *Nobody knows nothing and anything*. Richard Dreyfuss, the young star, thought the great white shark would be a white elephant, and said so on TV. He was wrong.

June 20, opening day, and the opening shot: beautiful young Chrissie stripping down to her bikini, daring her boyfriend to join her for a playful moonlight dip at a bucolic beachside resort called "Amity." Soothing seaside sounds. A beautiful body, filmed from underneath. Dah-tum. Dah-dum. Dahtum dahtum dahtumdahtumdahtum . . .

Screams.

The invisible force, pulling her to her death from below as she prays to God . . .

Just like in *The Exorcist*, terrified audience members shrieked, vomited, jumped from their seats, ran from the theater. The ones who stayed, enraptured, came back to see it again and again.

Jaws became the first movie to gross $100 million. A second ad campaign that fall implored, "SEE IT AGAIN (with your eyes *open*)." By which point the merchandising had taken over: toys, T-shirts, posters, a ride at the Universal Studios theme park—sharks, sharks, sharks, everywhere.

Remember Aristotle, explaining why it is pleasing to be horrified in its theater: he said that tragedy has "pain as its mother," and that displaying that pain, containing it within the safe confines of a theater, in order to thereby reduce it, allowed viewers to "settle down as if they have attained healing"—*catharsis*, in Greek: cleansing, purification, *purgation*.

So what fears was it that *Jaws* purged? What were the pains that were its mother?

Early in the movie, the police chief attempted to shut down the beach; the mayor refused to let him: here was that all too familiar venality of the institutions of authority, too greedy or selfish or incompetent to protect the public, interested only in protecting their prerogatives and power. The picture was shot in the summer of 1974, under the sign of the last days of Watergate—"We used to have these wonderful 'impeach Nixon' parties," Dreyfuss remembered—and on a location across Martha's Vineyard from the Chappaquiddick bridge where, some said, a Kennedy got away with manslaughter of a beautiful young girl or worse. As it came out, the *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis collated the latest opinion poll statistics: in ten years the proportion of people who distrusted the government had risen from 22 to 62 percent; the proportion who believed that there were "quite a few" crooks in government had risen from 29 to 45 percent; and 68 percent thought the country's leaders had "consistently lied to the American people—the figure had been 38 percent in 1972.

The film sent out an odd trio to hunt down the shark: in addition to the earnest, thoughtful sheriff there were a mildly hippieish young oceanographer, devoted to cutting-edge technology, and an oddball professional shark hunter, a steely Navy veteran of World War II, from back when America won wars, who relied on intuition, not technology, and harbored Ahab-like tendencies. They agreed about nothing, shared nothing but their rickety vessel (which broke down), distrusted each other and everything else—kind of like America these days. So how could they possibly pull together to vanquish the savage foe?

And then there was the nature of that foe: it was invisible, like dread. Then suddenly it crashed to the surface, savaging helpless innocents, unaware they even had had anything to fear—until the new fear was everywhere, consuming everything.

Which was how it felt to be an American now.

Savage new invisible dangers seemed to lurk around every corner. A new kind of air pollution, sulfur dioxide, a pungent, colorless gas produced by combustion of sulfur-laden fuel oils that combines easily with water vapor and oxygen to form sulfuric acid—"acid rain," supposed to be capable of corroding billboards and maybe even lungs. An official of the Texas Air Control Board said it was already so serious in Corpus Christi "that some hard decisions will have to be made about allowing any further industrial growth there at all." "Killer bees": "Millions of African killer bees with nasty tempers," as UPI described them on June 15, five days before *Jaws* opened, "immune to any kind of geographical or whatever barrier . . . capable of nesting almost anyway . . . headed relentlessly toward the United States." They were the product, allegedly, of a Brazilian beekeeper who in 1957 accidentally released a fierce apian strain brought from Africa, taking over Brazil's native population, science-fiction-style, producing an annual death toll there of three hundred. In an experiment published in *BioScience* magazine, a one-inch by one-inch patch of leather jiggled on a string outside a hive of the "Africanized" bees was stung ninety-two times in five seconds, then the bees "chased the heavily protected experimenter for more than a thousand yards." Then there was butadiene, a hazardous chemical regularly shipped by rail: "Once a car carrying butadiene is punctured, the least spark can cause it to ignite," *Texas Monthly* reported. "That means the railroad tracks had better be in tip-top shape. They aren't."

Dah-tum. Dah-tum. Dahtum dahtum dahtumdahtumdahtum . . .

SIMULTANEOUSLY THAT SUMMER CAME THE NEWS THAT A BELOVED SYMbol of America's long-ago innocence turned out to be not so innocent after all.

It was *Time*, in its June 2 issue, citing "credible sources," that first brought the news: that in 1961 John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy, enraged at the failure at the Bay of Pigs invasion, "covertly ordered agencies of the U.S. government to find some sure means of deposing Fidel Castro, Cuba's chief of state. Whether or not assassination attempts were authorized by the Kennedys is still unclear. . . . The CIA did work with two U.S. Mafia leaders, Sam 'Sam the Cigar' Giancana and John 'Handsome John' Roselli, in unsuccessful attempts to kill the Cuban leader." *Time* then drilled down to the scoop's strongest implication: "it tends to knock down the notion that the CIA was operating wildly beyond presidential control in scheming against foreign leaders." It also tended to knock down the notion—"There used to be a President who didn't lie, but he's dead!" as the kindergartner in Long Beach, California, told his teacher the previous year—that once upon a time, America was different; before, that is, sordid old Richard Nixon came along. "The Vanishing American Hero," as a *U.S. News & World Report* cover story put it that summer. *Texas Monthly* countered that fall with a corrective: "Heroes for Post-Watergate America."

Kennedy family retainers rushed into print to defend the dead men's honor. Historian and former Kennedy special assistant Arthur Schlesinger posted a letter to the *New York Times* on June 3 insisting such a thing simply was not possible: "Quite apart from all the other reasons, moral and prudential, that led John and Robert Kennedy to reject the idea of assassinating Castro, it must be remembered that both men were deeply concerned, almost obsessed, with the fate of the Bay of Pigs prisoners. Nothing would have doomed these prisoners more certainly than an American attempt to kill Castro." The next day, in the same paper, William Safire published a column, titled "Nixon Never Did," treating the accusation as settled fact, listing all the sins that rendered President Kennedy morally inferior to *his* former boss, Richard Nixon: "*Nixon never ordered the murder of a fellow chief of state. . . . Nixon never used the FBI and CIA to spy on political opponents. . . . Nixon never lied to the people about his health just before an election.*"

He concluded, "Of course we would know a great deal more about other things [Kennedy] did if Congress were to spend one-tenth the time and money investigating the previous Administrations that it expended on Nixon's. But that is not to be."

The White House panicked at the news. First, on June 6, Ron Nessen told the press that the Rockefeller Commission report, due the following week, would not discuss assassinations. One reporter, recalling promises of a complete and frank official reckoning, asked if Richard

Nixon had been advising the administration on how to conduct a successful cover-up. For an hour, reporters mercilessly grilled him—until Nessen slammed shut his briefing book and stormed out of the press room. “No Time for Cover-Up,” read the *New York Times*' editorial headline: Watergate language. Nessen came to hate the media so much he considered another line of work—though he had himself been an NBC correspondent only ten months earlier. The attorney general found it necessary to assure the nation that “no President may order assassinations”—reassuring, to the suspicious circles, in the same way Richard Nixon assuring the nation he was not a crook was reassuring.

The Rockefeller Commission report dropped on June 10. The *Times* expressed partial satisfaction at the 350-page “trenchant, factual and plain-spoken document.” It revealed that the CIA's campaign against domestic dissent, Operation CHAOS, opened files on more than three hundred thousand individuals and organizations, including Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the staid establishment Negroes of the Washington Urban League; concluded that the CIA had no role in instigating Watergate, and none in the assassination of President Kennedy—and buried deep within, made the eye-popping revelation that the CIA had tested LSD on people who weren't told of the tests, and that at least one person died in 1953 as a result. But it punted on passing judgment on the “incomplete and extremely sensitive” question of assassinations of foreign leaders. The president promised to pass the assassination files on to the Church Committee, which promised a month of closed-door hearings on the subject. And the reforms it suggested were timorous. The *Times* didn't expect much would come of them. The report also said the CIA had taken steps in 1973 and 1974 that “have gone far to terminate the activities upon which this investigation has focused.”

But if the White House thought that would put the CIA story to rest, they were mistaken. Like the great white shark in *Jaws*, the stories kept on crashing to the surface, day after day after day.

Like the fact that the chairman of the House's intelligence inquiry, Lucien Nedzi of Michigan, had been briefed about the CIA's domestic spying, and the possibility it had been involved in assassinations, more than a year earlier and did and said nothing about it—a perfect emblem of precisely the congressional failure of oversight Nedzi's committee had been impaneled to investigate. Another fox guarding the henhouse.

Like the fact, as reported in *Time* the next week, that the *New York Times* had known of the assassination allegations for months but had chosen not to print them. And the news, on June 19, of the suspicious murder of Sam Giancana, the very mafioso reputed to have been the CIA's man in Havana. Five days later, *Time* reported in detail about the agency's bizarre Murder Inc. schemes there: “The medical section of the CIA produced some exotic pills and even ‘fixed’ a box of fine Havana cigars . . . the pills were turned over to the Mafia. The would-be assassin was to have been paid $150,000 if he succeeded; some earnest money, ‘a few thousand dollars,’ was turned over to him. Giancana and Roselli expected something more important than money: both were under investigation by the Department of Justice and hoped to escape prosecution.” The next week, *Time* reported that in an interview, the man who had been the CIA's general counsel from its 1947 founding through 1973 and “a confidant of one director after another” said Robert F. Kennedy knew all about the plotting by the CIA and “didn't seem very perturbed.” (“And what do you do for a living?” the musical political humorist Mark Russell asked, posing as a Church staffer, in his nightclub act, a few nights after Roselli's closed-door testimony. The answer: “I'm a notorious gangster and hit man.” “And how long have you worked for the government?”)

And then there was the fact that in 1953 a twenty-two-year-old Army biochemist named Frank Olson, an unwitting participant in a CIA study in which his drink was spiked with LSD, jumped out a window to his death. The president publicly invited his outraged family to the Oval Office and apologized for the “inexcusable and unforgivable” incident—perhaps to head off their plans to sue the government for wrongful death. Meanwhile two left-wing congressmen, Bob Kasten and Ron Dellums, claimed evidence of “years-long CIA penetration of the White House itself,” without any president's having known. “Vicious nonsense,” the CIA director responded—but these days, who knew?

An article by the *Times*' Tad Szulc in *New York* magazine, called “The Politics of Assassination,” recorded suspicions that one of the things the Rockefeller Commission was actively covering up was a CIA plot to murder China's premier, Chou En-lai. It noted that the Rockefeller Commission members worked under such intense paranoia they weren't allowed to leave their shoes outside their hotel rooms to be shined lest recording devices be planted inside. Soon after, one of the Democratic heroes of the Judiciary Committee's Watergate investigation, William Hungate, announced he was retiring from Congress in disillusionment. He said “politics has gone from an age of ‘Camelot’ when all things were possible to the age of ‘Watergate’ when all things are suspect.”

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THE GIANCANA NEWS WAS REPORTED IN AN ISSUE OF *TIME* WHOSE COVER pointed a gun at the reader. It announced an article, at 9,237 words one of the longest investigations in the magazine's history, documenting a crime wave that was making American streets all but impassable: eleven murders in Atlanta within seventy-two hours, six by gunfire; a four-year-old stabbed to death by a teenager seeking the forty cents in his pocket, outside Detroit; statistics, staggering statistics, including a 20 percent increase in crime over the past twelve months in the supposedly safe suburbs and 21 percent in rural areas—on and on and on, for page after page. The next month Gallup asked city dwellers what they thought was America's worst problem. Only 5 percent cited inflation and 11 percent said unemployment, though both were at their highest levels since shortly after World War II. Twenty-one percent cited crime—and 75 percent of women said they were afraid to walk near their homes at night. New Justice Department statistics discovered that in 1973 one out of four households had endured a robbery, rape, assault, burglary, larceny, or auto theft—though who knew: Attorney General Edward Levi said a third of all crimes went unreported in official channels. A sociologist interviewed an old Jewish immigrant woman in Brooklyn. She said, "I am locked up like the ghettoes of Europe. . . . I am afraid of people knocking down my door. I am still not free."

Elected officials, too, were going to jail—including, most recently, a former governor of Oklahoma. The Associated Press reported the findings of two left-wing economists that a combination of multinational corporations' drive for profit maximization and an inability to control new ways of rocketing money around the world "could plunge the nation into a depression comparable to that of the 1930s." In Orangeburg, South Carolina, a faulty job rigging the explosives was the only thing that saved the county courthouse—and a church kindergarten next door—from going up in smithereens: apparently someone was protesting against civil rights activists who for their part had protested the police killing of a black youth. What madness couldn't be visited on America next?

Maybe the bankruptcy of the greatest American city, where middle-class civil servants were behaving like criminal anarchists.

The lurid images began in May, when hundreds of Hunter College students took over the office of the dean of students after Mayor Abe Beame proposed deep cuts in the school's budget. By June, eight thousand New York City municipal workers rallied on the narrow, twisting downtown streets outside the headquarters of First National City Bank, accusing the bank of complicity in planned austerity layoffs of thousands of their colleagues. Police threatened a wildcat strike, distributing WELCOME TO FEAR CITY pamphlets with a pirate-style death's head on the cover, advising tourists to stay indoors after dark, skip public transportation, and "until things change, stay away from New York if you possibly can." The feared-for layoffs arrived. On June 28, garbagemen, reacting to the firing of three thousand comrades, staged a one-day walkout. "Wait till the rats come!" they chanted. WELCOME TO STINK CITY, their pamphlets read.

On July 1, five hundred laid-off police officers stationed themselves in blockade formation before the Brooklyn Bridge, let air out of random cars' tires, threatened motorists, and threw cans and bottles at the uniformed fellow cops who were begging them to cease and desist. The next day highway workers blockaded the Henry Hudson Parkway during rush hour. By Independence Day, City Hall and other government buildings came under such frequent siege that cops kept up the crowd-control barriers on a permanent basis—"like part of the city's furniture," a historian wrote. It was summer; it was hot. So when garbage collection began slowing down with the layoffs, New Yorkers started throwing their trash out in the middle of the street, which some people turned into bonfires—right in time for Independence Day, when a journalist in Miami claimed he could convince only one person out of fifty he asked to sign the Declaration of Independence. "Commie junk," one called it. Another threatened to call the cops on him. A third said, "Be careful who you show that kind of anti-government stuff to, buddy." And: "The boss will have to read this before I can let you put it in the shop window. But, politically, I can tell you he don't lean that way. He's a Republican."

HERE WAS ANOTHER OF THOSE *PREDICTIONS FOR 1974:* A "DECLARATION of bankruptcy for New York City"—"the first tangible sign of the collapse of our entire civilization." A year later, that augury looked to be coming true, too.

The roots of the Great New York City Fiscal Crisis lay in recession: the economic downturn of 1974–75 hit the Northeast with a speed and force all out of proportion to the rest of the country. New York had always supported a program of middle-class entitlement unlike anything anywhere else, a sort of socialism in one city: subsidized housing and day-care centers; free college at the world-class City University of New York; free museum admission; nineteen municipal hospitals, many of them world-class; free directory assistance—amenities that seemed only natural for a metropolis transforming itself, in the boom years after

World War II, into the greatest city in the world. "I do not propose," Mayor Robert F. Wagner pronounced in his 1965 budget message, "to permit our fiscal problems to set the limits of our commitments to meet the essential needs of the cities." Neither, indeed, did the city's investment banks, which all but begged the city to keep borrowing money, because municipal bonds paid high interest rates; were exempt from federal, state, and municipal taxes; and seemed to entail negligible risk. It took two to tangle a city in unsustainable debt.

It worked, until it didn't. The city's manufacturing base had declined, and the unemployment rate, under 5 percent in 1970, now hovered above 12 percent. White middle-class New Yorkers, fearing crime, fled to the suburbs. Federal and state aid leveled off; expectations that Richard Nixon's national health insurance bills would relieve the city of its massive outlays for Medicaid came a cropper when Congress voted them down, first in 1971, then in 1974 (conservatives opposed them because they were too generous, liberals because they were not generous enough). Bills came due that this newly atrophied level of revenue simply could not cover: by the days of Nixon's resignation the city's debt was $11 billion, a third of that in short-term notes soon to come due, and more than 11 percent of the city's spending went to interest payments on the debt—to banks suddenly reconsidering their lending practices in a recession. Other tax shelters started looking more attractive to those banks. So did other customers—for instance the same resource-rich Third World nations that so irked Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Banks started asking for some of that loaned money back, and started charging more interest to let New York rent more. In September 1973 the *Wall Street Journal* had reported, "Our cities have by and large weathered their financial crises." Now the greatest city in the world was going broke. Like the energy crisis, this crisis seemed to come out of nowhere.

In December 1974 Mayor Beame made a pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., to meet with treasury secretary William Simon. Beame explained the actions he had already taken to correct the city's fiscal imbalances, including freezing most city hiring and merit pay increases; he then argued that, given that America's most international city had to pay higher interest rates than any municipality in the country, it would be in the national interest for the Treasury Department to loan New York the money it needed by buying its municipal paper directly.

The treasury secretary flipped.

"Mayor," he said, "if we did that the taxpayers would end up financing the campaign promises of every profligate local politician in the country."

There was something very disingenuous in the reaction. Bill Simon had formerly been senior partner in charge of government and municipal bonds at Salomon Brothers, and a member of the investment bank's seven-man executive committee—that is, one of the very people responsible for lending so much money to New York in the first place. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Simon had even served on a debt advisory committee set up by Beame back when he had been New York's comptroller. If New York had been borrowing beyond its means, William Simon was one of the people personally responsible.

He would later complain that he had been gulled—that the city's "Byzantine accounts" and "tortuous accounting practices" had been willfully devised to forestall just the kind of fiscal reckoning he was now bravely insisting upon. He wrote, "Even the most sophisticated financiers and the Treasury Department itself were totally unprepared" for such disregard of "the basic legal and ethical pact between the city and its debtors." And surely, in City Hall, there was plenty of blame to go around. But other motives, other assumptions, lay beyond Bill Simon's recalcitrance as well. These were ideological.

As he wrote three years later in a book modestly titled *A Time for Truth*, which was published by Reader's Digest Press and which spent some twenty weeks on the bestseller list: "The philosophy that has ruled our nation for over forty years had emerged in large measure from that very city which was America's intellectual headquarters, and inevitably, it was carried to its fullest expression in that city. In the collapse of New York those who choose to understand it could see a terrifying dress rehearsal of the state that lies ahead for this country if it continues to be guided by the same philosophy of government.... Nothing has destroyed New York's finances but the liberal political formula.... Liberal politics, endlessly glorifying its own 'humanism,' has in fact been annihilating the very conditions for human survival."

He spoke for his class. As a staffer wrote in a memo proposing language for First National City Bank's president to use in discussion with the mayor, this crisis was an opportunity: "many things"—he cited higher subway fares, cutbacks in the city workforce, and budget cuts generally—"can be done even if they are not technically possible." Technically possible, he meant, if interest groups like the municipal unions, the board of education, or municipal hospital administrators were afforded their traditional political deference. Well, they had been deferred to long enough. "The time," the staffer insisted, "is now." Now it was the capitalists' turn to be deferred to. Investment bankers and the mayor's Council of Business and Economic Advisors should "work in concert," he suggested, "to prepare a unified analysis which would clearly demonstrate the absolute inviability of the City if it continued on its present course."

Such language signified another front opening up in the right's political war: the corporate front. During the postwar boom, business had signed on as partners to the New Deal order, which seemed to be delivering an all but permanent broad-based American prosperity. They honored its core intellectual proposition, Keynesianism, which held that a key to building and sustaining prosperity was to harness the power of government to put money into ordinary consumers' pockets. More or less, they acceded to (or at were powerless to stop) the escalating pace of marketplace regulation—which reached its pinnacle under a president from the party of business, Richard Nixon. The *New Republic* called a tax bill he signed in 1969 "far and away the most 'anti-rich' tax reform proposal ever proposed by a Republican President in the 56 years of the existence of the income tax." Much of the new government revenue was spent on new regulatory agencies, like the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the National Transportation Safety Board, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (created by the most stringent federal mining legislation in U.S. history). In Washington, it felt like liberal lobbies were in the saddle: environmental groups like Friends of the Earth, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Environmental Action; groups associated with the consumer advocate Ralph Nader; aggressive legal advocates like the Center for Law and Social Policy—with "brilliant young staff members who mistrust or totally disbelieve the attributes of the enterprise system," Barry Goldwater complained in 1974, but who now raced up Capitol Hill to testify before congressional committees and often as not tied up their business adversaries in knots.

It felt endurable when Keynesianism was working. Now, however, it was not. Rates of profit were declining. Labor was more militant than at any time since the 1946–47 strike wave. It was time, the men in their leather-backed chairs and wood-paneled conference rooms began reasoning, to fight back—to create a political opposition, red in tooth and claw, to fight back against liberalism on the national stage.

Lemuel Boulware of General Electric had been saying the same thing for years, of course, going so far as to organize political strategy retreats for executives in all sorts of fields in the late 1950s on Gasparilla Island, off the Florida coast. After the Arab oil shock of 1973–74, he had many more frightened allies. The Conference Board, the venerable publisher

of economic indicators like the Consumer Confidence Index, held a series of conclaves through 1974 and 1975 on the social responsibility of business. Discussion soon turned to the question of the *survival* of business, and how "social responsibility" was sabotaging same. One executive worried, "One man, one vote has undermined the power of business in all capitalist countries since World War II." Another complained, "The have-nots are gaining steadily more political power to distribute the wealth downward."

In 1971, a corporate lawyer from Virginia (one of his clients was Philip Morris, and he was frustrated when Congress passed the Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act in 1970), chair of the education committee of the National Chamber of Commerce (whose budget doubled in size between 1974 and 1980), had written a widely circulated memo arguing that "the American economic system is under broad attack." It continued: business had to learn the lesson "that political power is necessary; that such power must be assiduously cultivated; and that when necessary it must be used aggressively and with determination." For instance, "The national television networks should be monitored in the same way that textbooks should be kept under constant surveillance. . . . Efforts should be made to see that the forum-type programs (the Today Show, Meet the Press, etc.) afford at least as much opportunity for supporters of the American system to participate as these programs do for those who attack it."

His memo insisted that advancing pro-free-market politics be "a primary responsibility of corporate management"—"far more than an increased emphasis on 'public relations' or 'government' affairs," but that corporations hire new executive vice presidents whose entire brief was countering "the attack on the enterprise system," with a "budget and staff adequate to the task." Corporate "public affairs" officers—lobbyists—had heretofore worked in Washington mostly to secure companies' advantages against their competitors. He was recommending something more radical: political action to assert the interests of corporate America as a class—a sort of union movement on behalf of capital. "Strength lies in organization, in careful long-range planning and implementation, in consistency of action over an indefinite period of years, in the scale of financing available only through joint effort, and in the political power available only through united action and national organizations." The lawyer, Lewis Powell, was soon appointed by Richard Nixon to the Supreme Court. And what he was recommending had already begun increasing apace. The National Association of Manufacturers had been aggressively lobbying against liberalism for decades, but from New York; in 1972 the group (and its political arm, the Business Industry Political Action Committee, or BIPAC) moved house to Washington, D.C.—because, a spokesman said, "the thing that affects business most today is government."

Two of the most prominent activists in the effort were former Nixon administration officials. Bryce Harlow had been Nixon's appointment secretary, and one of his most trusted confidants—all while on leave from Procter & Gamble's first Washington lobbying shop, which he himself had established in 1961. Now back in harness at P&G, he drafted himself as field general for the kind of organizing Powell proposed. "The danger had suddenly escalated," he recalled, referring to the election of the Watergate Babies in 1974. "We had to prevent business from being rolled up and put in the trash can by that Congress." The other, Charls (*sic*) Walker, had been a Treasury Department undersecretary. In 1975 he took over a struggling organization that advocated for estate tax recipients and turned it into a turbocharged lobbying shop dedicated to the proposition that the American economy was foundering for a lack of "capital formation"—that business did not have enough money, largely because the government extracted too much from it in taxes, which were then distributed downward to Americans who were not capitalists, destroying the conditions for national prosperity. This argument was precisely the opposite of Keynesianism—but a proposition that proved attractive enough to several formerly Keynesian Fortune 500 corporations that they each contributed two hundred thousand dollars to soon turn Walker's "American Council for Capital Formation" into a Washington juggernaut.

These were the circles in which the present treasury secretary was traveling. And he had no intention of bailing out New York—*ever*. Neither did William Simon intend to let his boss bail out New York—*ever*. Instead, he intended to make an example of it. And what he saw happen next only confirmed him in his judgment.

In December 1974 Mayor Beame ordered large-scale layoffs and cutbacks in municipal employment—and then, following union protests, reversed them. A young lawyer at Bankers Trust reported his accidental discovery that the tax receipts legally required to secure a $260 million note the bank had planned to buy did not exist. In January 1975, the city's comptroller canceled a planned sale of municipal notes; in February, a second sale was canceled. Promptly, the city's Urban Development Corporation became the first major government agency in the United States to go into default since the 1930s. Two weeks later, on March 6, the city offered another note on the market—and didn't receive a single underwriting bid. By May, the city's debt was $12.3 billion, and the word had gone forth from the great investment banks that such debt was unmarketable at just about any interest rate; officials predicted the city would default by June. The mayor made another ill-fated trip to Washington, this time for an audience with the president, Governor Hugh Carey, and representatives from Chase Manhattan, First National City Bank, and Mortgage Guarantee Trust in tow. A federal loan guarantee, Ford told them, would "merely postpone the city's coming to grips with its fiscal problems through needed budget slashing." On May 29, Beame complied, announcing an austerity budget calling for the immediate elimination of more than 12 percent of all city employment—a four-day municipal workweek, reductions in CUNY admissions, and library and health center closures.

He immediately reaped the whirlwind: cops blocking the Brooklyn Bridge; garbageman pledging a pestilence of rats—and no more money forthcoming from banks.

Like the fall of Saigon, it all seemed so sudden. "What was 'sudden,'" thundered back Simon in his 1978 book, "was the traumatic discovery by the financial community that it was being rooked into a Ponzi game." At the time, he was hardly less decorous. "We're going to sell New York to the Shah of Iran," he said to reporters. "It's a hell of an investment."

His voice led a chorus of business conservatives emboldened by the imminent collapse of a great American city to mock the profligacies of an utterly failed liberalism. *Barron's* invoked the news from Cambodia: "All Abe Beame need do is adopt the Khmer solution. That is, order every man, woman, and child out of the city." Christian conservatives, too: "Maybe it would be good for America if New York would go bankrupt," *Christianity Today* opined. "The citizenry might learn some elementary lessons of economics that apply to cities and nations as well as individuals." It was in part, said the young senator from Delaware, Joe Biden, a cultural thing: "Cities are viewed as the seed of corruption and duplicity." His House colleague Richardson Preyer agreed, echoing what he was hearing from his North Carolina constituents: "There is a general negative feeling toward New York. New York has a certain overtone of sinfulness about it."

"New York," *Fortune* magazine reported, "is different. City politicians seldom had to say no to anybody—whether union leaders making extravagant demands or citizens seeking benefits for themselves." Though it in fact was not really all that different. Simon spoke of overpaid, "parasitical" municipal workers, conceptually separate from the "productive population." They drew, he said, "appalling" pen-